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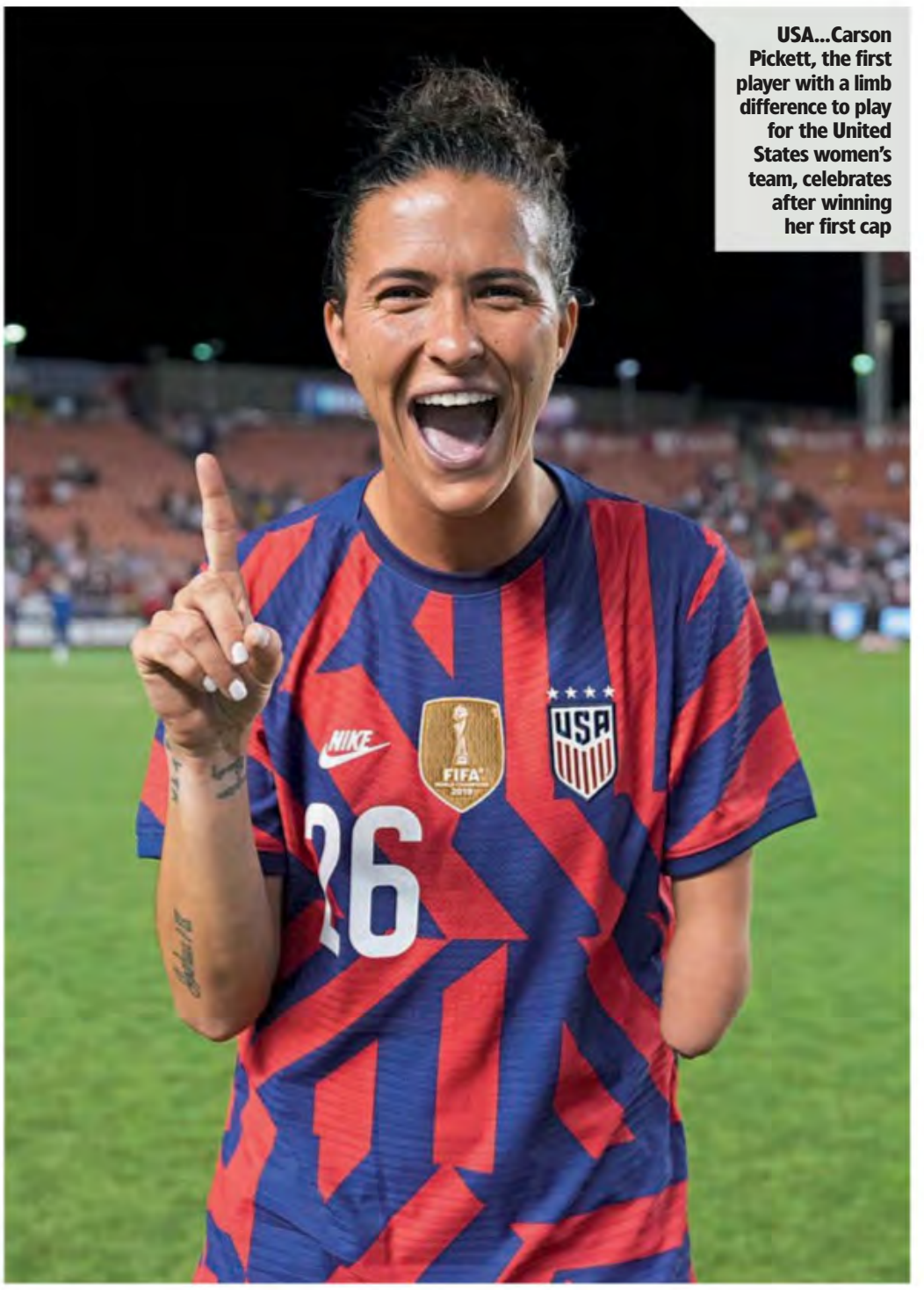
In Pictures

The global game caught on camera

Germany...Borussia Monchengladbach players lift the Cup Der Traditionen after winning the pre-season tournament in Duisburg

Ukraine...a group of youngsters attend a training session in Hostomel, near Kyiv, as the community attempts to return to normality

Brazil...the ball nestles in the corner after Hulk of Atletico Mineiro converts a penalty in the Copa Libertadores last 16 against Emelec



USA...Carson Pickett, the first player with a limb difference to play for the United States women's team, celebrates after winning her first cap

Thailand...Manchester United's Bruno Fernandes and Erik ten Hag lift "The Match" trophy after beating Liverpool 4-0 in Bangkok

Italy...new Lazio signing Marcos Antonio undergoes a medical at his new club

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FROM THE ASSISTANT EDITOR

After what feels like the first summer break from men's football in a very long time, the 2022-23 campaign is almost upon us, and what a fascinating season it promises to be.

On paper, we are set for some familiar-looking podiums at the top of Europe's major leagues come May and June 2023, yet in reality the upcoming campaign has the potential to be one of the most unique and unpredictable ever.

In a word, the cause of that unpredictability is: Qatar. The interruption of a winter World Cup is sure to have huge ramifications to the upcoming campaign. The hope is that this will mean less predictability, as even the big boys are thrown into disarray, and outsiders earn a one-off shot at the title or Champions League qualification. On the other hand, the fear is that the biggest and best-resourced squads will simply outmuscle and outspend their rivals once again.

> The interruption of a winter World Cup is sure to have huge ramifications to the upcoming campaign

Either way, an intriguing season is sure to come, and as always our network of experts assess the runners and riders from Europe's biggest leagues, and some of its smaller ones, too.

Not that the summer has been completely without football. The European Championship has demonstrated the growing strength and quality of the women's game. We'll have a full review of the competition in next month's issue.

Jamie Evans, Assistant Editor

Africa's No.1... Mane with the coveted award

AFRICA

Mane crowned king of Africa

It was a clean sweep for African champions Senegal at the CAF awards, as Sadio Mane was voted men's Footballer of the Year for the second time and his country won the men's Team of the Year prize.

The Bayern Munich forward, who converted the winning penalty in the AFCON 2021 final shootout in February, beat former Liverpool club-mate, Egyptian winger Mohamed Salah, and compatriot Edouard Mendy to the gong, presented at a ceremony in Rabat, Morocco.

In the other men's categories, Mane's national team boss Aliou Cisse was Coach of the Year, while Pape Ousmane Sakho and Tottenham's Pape Matar Sarr (both also Senegalese) won Goal and Young Player of the Year respectively.

In the women's awards, Nigeria and Barcelona forward Asisat Oshoala retained her crown as best Player (her fifth in total), South Africa's Desiree Ellis won the Coach gong, while Ghana's Evelyn Badu collected the Young Player prize.

On the domestic front, African and Moroccan champions Wydad were the men's Club of the Year, while South Africa's Mamelodi Sundowns won the female equivalent.

ENGLAND

Under-12s heading ban to be trialled

The FA has announced that a ban on heading will be trialled in Under-12s football for the

"The entire BVB family hopes that Sebastien makes a full recovery as soon as possible. We'll do everything in our power to ensure that he receives the best possible treatment"

Dortmund sporting director Sebastian Kehl after new signing Sebastien Haller was diagnosed with a testicular tumour

start of the coming season. The move comes in the wake of growing research that suggests ex-footballers are more likely to die from brain diseases than other people.

In 2020, Sir Bobby Charlton was diagnosed with dementia, with his fellow World Cup winners Jack Charlton and Nobby Stiles joining a long list of former players to pass away with the disease.

Children under 11 are already not coached to head the ball during training, and heading at youth level may soon become a thing of the past. "Should the trial be a success, the aim is to then remove deliberate heading from all football matches at U12 level and below from the 2023-24 season," said the FA in a statement announcing the trial.

The move follows a wider trend of sport's growing concern for the longer-term impact of head injuries. Former Wales rugby union captain Ryan Jones was recently diagnosed with early onset dementia at the age of 41.

QATAR

Offside technology in place for Qatar

State-of-the-art technology designed to speed up offside decisions will be used in Qatar for the 2022 World Cup, FIFA has confirmed.

By combining a sensor inside the ball with a network of synchronised cameras charting the position of every player on the pitch, technology will now be able to assess offside decisions. If a player is offside, the VAR will be alerted and can relay the information to the on-field referee.

According to the trials that took place at the Arab Cup and Club World Cup, offside VAR decisions were made up to 45 seconds faster. FIFA's head of refereeing, Pierluigi Collina, said: "We are very positive. It is ready."

State of the art...the 2022 World Cup ball contains a tracker

The month in numbers

Eye-catching facts and stats from the world of football this month...

12
Number of clubs now in the City Football Group portfolio following the purchase of Italian Serie B side Palermo.

1
Alexandro Bernabei will become the first Argentine to play for Celtic after joining the Scottish champions from Lanus.

9
CONCACAF Women's titles won by the United States after their 1-0 victory over Canada in this summer's final.

Number nine...USA players celebrate with the trophy

41
Age that Zlatan Ibrahimovic will turn at Milan after signing a one-year contract extension ahead of the 2022-23 campaign.

3
Premier League players to have played for Liverpool, Manchester City and Chelsea after Raheem Sterling signed for the Blues. He joins fellow forwards Nicolas Anelka and Daniel Sturridge on the list.

2024
Year by which Brentford will reopen their academy following a new Premier League rule dictating that all clubs must have one.

€267m
Value of revenue generated by Barcelona after selling 10 per cent of their La Liga TV rights for the next 25 years to global investment firm Sixth Street, who will initially invest €207.5 million.

£350k
Reported weekly salary of Mohamed Salah following his decision to extend his contract at Liverpool until 2025.

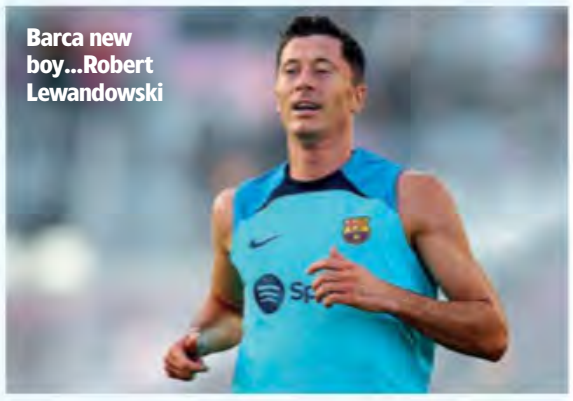
1
Maria Sole Ferrieri Caputi will be Italy's first female referee after joining Serie A's roster of officials for the 2022-23 season.

2024
Year that the next Africa Cup of Nations finals will take place – instead of 2023 – due to concerns over the weather in Ivory Coast in June and July.

€50m
Compensation demanded from FIFA by Shakhtar Donetsk, who believe they have lost out on transfer fees as a result of the federation's changes to transfer regulations.

10
Major League Soccer matches that Sporting Kansas City defender Kortne Ford will be suspended for after testing positive for a banned substance.

€500m
Robert Lewandowski's buyout clause at Barcelona after Poland's all-time record goalscorer joined the Spanish giants from Bayern Munich for €50m.



Barca new boy...Robert Lewandowski

21
Paulo Dybala's squad number at new team Roma after he rejected the No.10 shirt out of respect for club legend Francesco Totti.

Keir RADNEDGE

THE INSIDER

Blatter and Platini acquitted in Switzerland

Cleared...Sepp Blatter and Michel Platini leave court after their acquittal

Sepp Blatter and Michel Platini are innocent – but do not expect to see them strutting their stuff again on the world football stage. Their days in the sun as all-powerful presidents of FIFA and UEFA respectively are long gone.

Even the innocent verdicts from a Swiss criminal court in Bellinzona over the infamous matter of a 2m Swiss francs payment back in 2011 has not relieved the two old friends turned enemies of all the judicial clouds hanging over their heads. Nor will it make any difference whatsoever to the bans imposed at one time or another by the FIFA ethics committee. That ship has also sailed.

To understand the complexity of issues quite beyond the grasp of the Swiss judiciary means trekking all the way back to the summer of 2015 and the drama surrounding revelations by the United States Department of Justice into what its directors were excited to describe as the "World Cup of scandal."

Briefly, seven senior football bosses were detained on the eve of FIFA Congress with six extradited to the US and one to Uruguay on bribery and money-laundering charges. Subsequently around 40 men, one woman and several companies were charged. Almost all played ball with the investigators and collected a range of sentences from jail time to fines and financial sequestrations.

The Office of the Swiss Attorney-General, highly embarrassed at the US stepping in where it had turned a blind eye, then raided FIFA HQ, seized a ton of documents and digital records and launched around 25 investigations, some concerning events surrounding the award of the 2022 World Cup to Qatar.

Investigators were then directed toward a mysterious payment of 2m Swiss francs made by FIFA to Platini with Blatter's approval. The damning issue was that the payment had been made for work Platini had undertaken ten years earlier when he was Blatter's so-called "football counsellor."

This, though, had no connection whatsoever with "FIFAGate" itself.

Hence in September 2015, four months after the FIFAGate explosion, the two men were yanked out of an executive committee meeting in FIFA's grand, granite-and-glass HQ by Swiss investigators and questioned. They have never been back, were suspended from all football involvement and subsequently charged with fraud.

The case finally came to court in June in Bellinzona. Prosecutors described the payment as "without a legal basis" and said it had "unlawfully enriched Platini" because there was no written contract at the time. Blatter and Platini denied guilt,

maintaining that they had struck a verbal "gentleman's agreement." They explained that Platini had chosen not to claim the money when it was originally promised due to FIFA's perilous finances in the early 2000s, waiting until 2010 to pursue the money instead.

They were cleared of all charges, Blatter was awarded costs and Platini was told he had a right to keep the money.

This went down badly with FIFA, which had been a party to the prosecution case in the hope of reclaiming the 2m Swiss francs. The verdict was also a further public demonstration of the impotence of the Swiss judicial system in dealing with international sports federations. But then, that is one reason why so many of them are headquartered in Switzerland – the banking secrecy, lax controls and tax easements.

Two years ago, also in Switzerland, the trial of three ex-German DFB bosses and a former FIFA general secretary collapsed. Prosecutors had taken so long in bringing the case to court that it ran into the COVID-19 pandemic and then exceeded a statute of limitations.

They were cleared of all charges, Blatter was awarded costs and Platini was told he had a right to keep the money

Not only that. None of those two-dozen investigations launched in the wake of FIFAGate have ever come to court. Swiss banking secrecy has made judicial investigation extremely difficult.

In contrast, those involved in FIFAGate made the fatal mistake of using the American banking system to shift their ill-gotten gains from media rights and sponsorship awards – and nothing is beyond the reach of the FBI and the IRS.

So back to Blatter and Platini.

Blatter is now 86 and is in poor health but, despite the Bellinzona verdict, is not yet out of the judicial woods. It has been reported that the Swiss have dropped charges against him over a $1m loan to the Trinidad and Tobago Football Association, which was chaired at the time by Jack Warner, and also over the World Cup rights sale. However, in a plot twist worthy of Franz Kafka, he now faces a criminal complaint by FIFA, filed in December 2020, about the property deal for the white elephant World Football Museum in downtown Zurich.

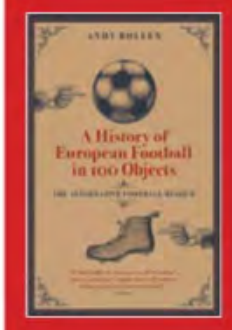
As in all other cases, Blatter insists he has done nothing wrong. His lawyers described the accusations as "baseless", yet Gianni Infantino's FIFA remain intent on pursuing him.

As for Platini, he has fought relentlessly to clear his name and his initial ban from football has long since expired. He remains resentful and bitter, not least at the sight of Infantino, his UEFA secretary general, sitting on the FIFA throne he had long coveted. Platini is not free of legal entanglement either. He remains under investigation back in France over his role in the World Cup award to Qatar and relationship with former President Nicolas Sarkozy. Platini, like Blatter, protests his innocence.

Even Infantino is not immune. In his own turn he is under investigation over secret meetings with the then Swiss Attorney-General and other lawyer colleagues in 2015.

Will anything come of it? The betting, after the latest Bellinzona debacle for Swiss prosecutors, is that it will not. Merely another tarnished FIFA story which will run and run.

BOOKS THIS MONTH



A HISTORY OF EUROPEAN FOOTBALL IN 100 OBJECTS
By Andy Bollen (Pitch Publishing, £16.99)

A History of European Football in 100 Objects: The Alternative Football Museum reveals the shocking hidden history of European football. Along the way you'll meet Dundalk's one-armed super striker, Austrian legend Matthias Sindelar and the Italian George Best. Bollen's insightful take on the game is compelling and at times poignant. It is an exhibition for every curious football fan.

GOODISON MEMORIES
By Steve Zocek (Pitch Publishing, £16.99)

Goodison Park, the home of Everton since 1892, has witnessed highs and lows and been graced by the likes of Dixie Dean, Tommy Lawton, Bob Latchford, Gary Lineker, Pele and Eusebio. As the Toffees prepare to move to the waterfront, *Goodison Memories* celebrates that legendary stadium with vivid recollections not from Evertonians, but from opposition players, managers, officials and journalists.

Jonathan WILSON

TECHNICALLY SPEAKING

Rule changes create more issues than they solve

Football is a mature game. Look at the 12 laws drawn up by the nascent Football Association in 1863 and what they describe is immediately identifiable as football. After a few years of rapid development, those laws have undergone such minor modification that the 1925 change in the offside law and the prohibition of the back-pass in 1992 feel like seismic events.

But we do live in an age of tinkering and tweaking, and thanks in part because of the personality of David Elleray, the former referee who is now the technical director of IFAB, and in part because of VAR, the scrutiny passages of play are now subjected to create a new demand for clarity and uniformity. As the furore over what constitutes handball and offside go on, this summer has brought discussion over two aspects: the throw-in and time-keeping.

Throw-ins have remained essentially unchanged since 1895 when, to prevent players hurling the ball from one end of the field to the other, it was stipulated that the ball had to be returned to play with two hands. In 1965 that was amended so throw-ins had to be taken from "behind and over" the head of the taker, a slightly odd change that forced an awkward action preventing the ball essentially being dropped at the feet of a team-mate.

It is that which makes the throw-in feel slightly unsatisfactory, particularly at lower levels of the game, but also at elite level too (Liverpool's decision to employ Thomas Gronnemark as a specialist throw-in coach was partly fuelled by their low rate of possession retention from throws). Controlling a throw-in isn't easy, particularly under pressure, and pretty much everybody who has played at any level must have experienced the embarrassment of trying to cushion a throw back to the taker only to skew it off the pitch.

Which raises an obvious question: why should a team that has put the ball out of play be advantaged by making the other team return it to play in such a difficult way? It's a similar logic to that which said a goal-kick had to leave the box before being touched by another player. To modern minds at least there seems no sense in preventing a team simply retaining possession.

So what can be done to make it easier for a side to keep the ball from a throw-in? The experiment with kick-ins seems to create more issues than it solves: throw-ins for the attacking team shouldn't essentially become the equivalent of corners so you can just launch the ball into the box. And equally allowing a defending team to thump the ball downfield feels a reversion to the days of one-handed throws that made it too easy for a side to clear their lines. The solution would seem relatively easy: allow one-handed throws in which the hand remains below the waist so the ball can be rolled to a team-mate but not hurled great distances.

Time-keeping is the other major issue. Time-wasting is a scourge and far too few referees take a hard line against it. Everybody has seen goalkeepers booked for dawdling

Throw-ins...Trent Alexander-Arnold has benefitted from Liverpool's throw-in coach

> This summer has brought discussion over two aspects: the throw-in and time-keeping

Time wasting ...this year's AFCON finals suffered

over goal-kicks, but hardly anybody has seen one sent off for continuing to do so. Periods of stoppage-time have got longer in recent years but, still, more than five minutes feels unusual; time-wasting, feigning injury, breaking the rhythm of the game by protesting against every decision, are issues that blight football.

An obvious solution would seem to be stopping the clock whenever the ball goes out of play – although the issue of breaking the rhythm of a team building momentum is perhaps insoluble. Most metrics suggest the ball is in play for around 55 minutes of the 90: that means retaining two halves of 45 minutes would be absurd, with games stretching on for well over two hours. But there is no reason other than tradition why matches couldn't become two halves of 27 minutes 30 seconds, or 30 minutes. They would still take the same amount of time.

The problem is the danger that football is slowed down. If the clock runs only when the ball is in play, there is no incentive (beyond momentum) for a team chasing an equaliser or a winner to keep the game flowing. The potential for additional advert breaks or time-outs is obvious, and it's surely the case that one of football's great beauties, certainly when compared to, say, American football, is its fluency. But given how the final minutes of knockout games – extra-time between Real Madrid and Manchester City last season, say, or any game at this year's Africa Cup of Nations involving Egypt – can wither into nothingness, it's surely worth at least a trial.

It is one of football's great strengths that it is such a simple game and that it has changed so little over the decades that it remains essentially the same game now that it was 150 years ago. But it should never be afraid of evolutionary tweaks, so long as they are undertaken with the sport itself, rather than entertainment or commerce, in mind.

REPORTS WE COULDN'T MAKE UP

Staying in Berlin ...Kevin-Prince Boateng

1 KP'S KEBABS

Fans of Hertha Berlin have had little to smile about over the last year, with the club only narrowly avoiding relegation from the Bundesliga. But they would have been greatly cheered after Kevin-Prince Boateng's contract renewal this summer. Not because of the Ghanaian's performances on the pitch – he failed to score or assist a league goal last season – but rather his actions off it. After penning the deal until next year, Boateng announced he will give away 2,023 free kebabs to Hertha supporters the day before the new season.

2 THE WORST MISS OF ALL TIME?

Ronny Rosenthal, Chris Iwelumo, Fernando Torres and others can finally rest easy: the title of worst-ever miss has been claimed by William Akio, and is unlikely to ever be relinquished. The Valour FC player's miss, in his side's Canadian Premier League clash with HFX Wanderers, almost deserves to be in a category of its own: the ball had already partly crossed the line when Akio arrived to boot the ball out for a throw-in. The best explanation was that the South Sudan international thought the ball was in, and kicked it away in celebration. The miss turned out to be one of his final acts for the club, as he joined Scottish Premiership side Ross County just a few days later.

3 EASY COME, EASY SKO

It's fair to say that Iran's World Cup preparations have not been without drama. In mid-July, with Qatar just a few months away, coach Dragan Skocic was sacked by the technical committee of the Iran Football Federation (FFIRI). The Croat himself only arrived during qualifying, steering the team to top spot in their final round group. But, less than a week after his "sacking", Skocic was back. The FFIRI then declared its "all-round support for the technical staff of the national team," in possibly one of the most hollow statements of support a manager has ever received.

4 GOALS GALORE

The Sierra Leone football association has launched an investigation after two extraordinary scorelines. Kahunla Rangers and Kono's Gulf went into their games level on points and pushing for promotion, knowing that goal difference would be decisive. And both sides succeeded in boosting their ratio: Kahunla beat Lumbebu United 95-0, and Gulf won 91-1 against Koquima Lebanon. The scorelines are even more extraordinary given that the half-time scores were only 2-0 and 7-1, meaning that they both averaged almost two second-half goals a minute. Both results have been annulled because of suspicions of match manipulation, with the federation's president saying: "We're going to launch an immediate investigation. All those found guilty will be handed over to the country's anti-corruption commission."

5 THE RISE AND FALL OF ANZHI MAKHACHKALA

It is hard to think of a harder or faster fall from grace than the story of Anzhi. In 2011, the club was propelled up the Russian Premier League after being taken over by billionaire Suleyman Kerimov, who signed a host of high-profile names, including Samuel Eto'o and Roberto Carlos. Yet two seasons in the Europa League were as high as they managed to fly. They were relegated in 2014 and spiralled even further after Kerimov sold up in 2016. After three seasons in the third tier, the club has now been wound up after failing to renew its licence for the 2022-23 season.

Farewell Anzhi... Samuel Eto'o spent two years with the Russians

"It is the only club in the world that has no money, but then buys all the players they want...it's a bit strange, a bit crazy"

Bayern Munich coach Julian Nagelsmann aims a parting shot following Barcelona's signing of Robert Lewandowski

PEOPLE ON THE MOVE

IN

EUROPE

Athletic Bilbao announced the return of **ERNESTO VALVERDE** for a third spell. The former Barcelona coach has taken charge of more games for the Basque side than any other manager.

MESUT OZIL joined Istanbul Basaksehir after his Fenerbahce contract was torn up by the club.

Turkish switch ...Mesut Ozil

Paris Saint-Germain appointed **CHRISTOPHE GALTIER** to replace Mauricio Pochettino, and Marseille hired **IGOR TUDOR** following Jorge Sampaoli's decision to quit.

Ajax captured Netherlands left-back **OWEN WIJNDAL** for €10 million from AZ, while Galatasaray signed **HARIS SEFEROVIC** on loan from Benfica.

Burnley striker **WOUT WEGHORST** joined Turkish side Besiktas on loan and Norway forward **JOSH KING** left Watford for Fenerbahce. Meanwhile, Fulham's former record signing **JEAN-MICHAEL SERI** joined Hull City on a free transfer.

Birmingham City named Republic of Ireland assistant **JOHN EUSTACE** as their head coach to replace outgoing Lee Bowyer, while Huddersfield Town appointed **DANNY SCHOFIELD** to replace Carlos Corberan.

Republic of Ireland's 93-cap winger **AIDEN McGEADY** signed for Hibernian after leaving Sunderland this summer.

Cyprus appointed former Georgia and Newcastle United winger **TEMURI KETSBAIA** as their new head coach.

AFRICA

Egypt hired former Benfica and Al Nassr coach **RUI VITORIA** as their new boss, while his fellow Portuguese coach **RICARDO SOARES** also moved to the North African country to take charge of Al Ahly following the exit of two-time African Champions League-winning manager Pitso Mosimane.

ASIA

Former Portugal and Manchester United star **NANI** signed for A-League side Melbourne Victory, and **CHARLIE AUSTIN** joined Brisbane Roar, the tenth club of his career.

Al Ittihad hired former Tottenham Hotspur boss **NUNO ESPIRITO SANTO** as their new manager. Polish midfielder **GRZEGORZ KRYCHOWIAK** also moved to Saudi Arabia, joining Al Shabab on loan from Krasnodar, while Colombia goalkeeper **DAVID OSPINA** moved to Al Nassr from Napoli.

Welcome... Nuno Espirito Santo's last club was Tottenham

CONCACAF

WAYNE ROONEY re-joined DC United, the club he played 48 MLS games for, as their new manager.

DC return...Rooney's presentation to the media

Los Angeles FC signed **GARETH BALE** on a 12-month deal following the expiry of his contract at Real Madrid.

Former MLS MVP **ALEJANDRO POZUELO** left Toronto FC in order to join David Beckham's Inter Miami. The Canadian side recruited **FEDERICO BERNARDESCHI** from Juventus as a replacement, linking up with Italy team-mate Lorenzo Insigne.

Familiar face...Nani made his Melbourne Victory debut against Manchester United

Appointments, sackings and loans

OUT

EUROPE

Ex-Arsenal and England midfielder **JACK WILSHERE** announced his retirement following a short spell in Denmark with AGF Aarhus to take charge of the Gunners' Under-18s.

Eintracht Frankfurt and Austria defender **MARTIN HINTEREGGER** announced his shock retirement at the age of just 29.

Arsenal youth coach...Jack Wilshere

SOUTH AMERICA

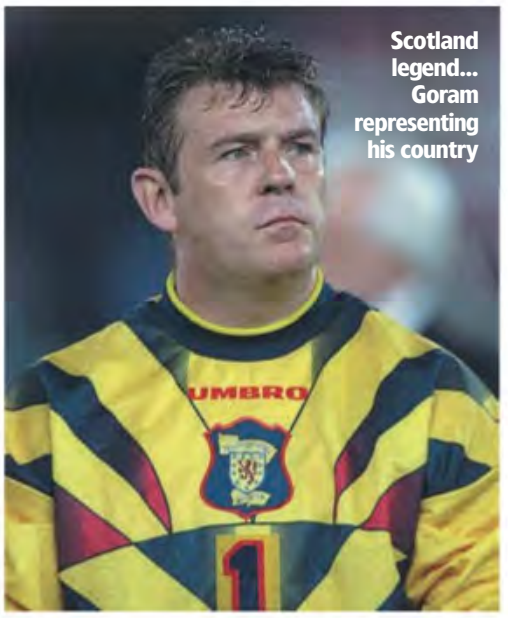
The Peruvian FA elected not to renew the contract of head coach **RICARDO GARECA** following their failure to qualify for the World Cup, and **CESAR FARIAS** stepped down as Bolivia boss to join Ecuadorian side Aucas.

The key transfers for Europe's top five leagues can be found on pages 36-55.

"He was the best goalkeeper I ever played with, he was absolutely unbelievable. And I would have to tell you, he was one hell of a man"

Ally McCoist on his former Rangers and Scotland team-mate, Andy Goram

OBITUARIES



Scotland legend... Goram representing his country

Andy GORAM
(1964–2022)

One of Scotland's finest goalkeepers of all time began his career at Oldham Athletic in 1981. His form in nearly seven years for the Latics earned him a call-up by then-Scotland manager Alex Ferguson in 1985, and a move to Hibernian two years later. In four years in Edinburgh Goram became club captain before joining Rangers in 1991, replacing England goalkeeper Chris Woods.

After playing every single match of the 1991–92 season, Goram became a key man in Walter Smith's side, going on to win five league titles in six years at the club, as well as three Scottish Cups and two League Cups.

In 1992–93, both the Scottish Football Writers' Association and the Scottish PFA named him Player of the Year as Rangers won the domestic treble. It was around this time that he earned the nickname "The Goalie" by the fans, who also voted him the club's greatest-ever goalkeeper in 2001.

An international career of 43 caps was defined by his rivalry with Jim Leighton, with the two men competing for the No.1 jersey at the 1986 and 1990 World Cups and the 1992 and 1996 European Championships. Goram played in all three of Scotland's matches at Euro '96, notably conceding Paul Gascoigne's famous goal for England at Wembley.

He was released by new Rangers manager Dick Advocaat in 1998, then left Scotland's World Cup squad after learning that Leighton would be starting ahead of him, and never played international football again. Goram did, however, experience some success with Motherwell, who he joined in 1999, and even spent a brief spell on loan at Ferguson's Manchester United during their successful title run-in of 2000–01.

Alongside his football career, Goram was also a first-class cricketer, becoming the only modern-era Scot to represent his country in both sports.

Victor BENITEZ
(1935–2022)

A Peruvian international and league title winner with both Alianza Lima and Boca Juniors, Benitez joined Milan in 1962. In his first season he was part of the team that won the European Cup, starting in the 2-1 victory over a Benfica side that included Eusebio, to become the first-ever Peruvian to win the trophy. The defender went on to spend eight years in Italy, playing for Messina, Venezia, Internazionale and Roma – where he won the Italian Cup – before returning to Sporting Cristal in his home country. One of his 11 Peru caps came in England's first-ever international against the South American side, with the hosts winning 4-1 in Lima against a side featuring Bobby Charlton and Jimmy Greaves.

Janusz KUPCEWICZ
(1955–2022)

Kupcewicz was a star of the Poland side that finished third at the 1982 World Cup. The midfielder's well-struck free-kick against France in the third-place play-off sealed a 3-2 win and the bronze medal. His boyhood club, Arka Gdynia, consider him to be their finest player, helping them to reach the Polish top flight and then win the Polish Cup in 1979 – their first major honour.

Francesco RIZZO
(1943–2022)

Former Serie A midfielder, representing a host of clubs including Milan, Cagliari, Fiorentina, Bologna and Genoa. Scored twice in two Italy caps, and was part of the *Azzurri's* 1966 World Cup squad.

Davie ROBB
(1947–2022)

Aberdeen's joint-tenth highest scorer of all time with 98 goals, including the extra-time winner in the 1976–77 League Cup final against Celtic. The striker played a total of 345 games for the Dons in 11 years, also winning the Scottish Cup in 1970. Robb left Scotland in 1978 for a career in America, representing Tampa Bay Rowdies, Philadelphia Fury, Vancouver Whitecaps and Tulsa Roughnecks.

Tributes...Rangers fans pay their respects to "The Goalie" Goram

Former Bury skipper ...Martyn Forrest

Martyn FORREST
(1979–2022)

Former Bury captain who was diagnosed with a brain tumour in 2008 after collapsing on the pitch.

Andras TOROCSIK
(1955–2022)

A Hungary international of 45 caps and 12 goals, the striker played at both the 1978 and 1982 World Cups. In Spain he started in the record-breaking 10-1 win over El Salvador, but was replaced by Laszlo Kiss, who went on to become the first and only player to score a World Cup hat-trick from the bench. Torocsik spent most of his club career with Ujpest, with whom he won three league titles and three cups, before going on to spend a year in France with Montpellier.

Euros-bound...Yartsev after Russia's victory over Wales in Cardiff

Georgi YARTSEV
(1948–2022)

Russia's manager at Euro 2004, overcoming Wales in the play-offs to reach the finals in Portugal. The tournament was something of a disaster, however, with the Russians the first side to be eliminated after defeats to Spain and the hosts. During the tournament, Yartsev sent home midfielder Alexander Mostovoi after he complained about the coach's methods, before a 2-1 win over Greece in the final game – the only side to beat the eventual champions.

Yartsev remained in the post for the 2006 World Cup qualifiers, but only lasted two matches: a 7-1 defeat to Portugal and a 1-1 draw with Estonia.

Faouzi MANSOURI
(1956–2022)

Algeria international who competed at two World Cups – in 1982, where the North Africans famously beat West Germany, and again in 1986. He played for Nimes, Beziers, Mulhouse and Montpellier in France.

Mark Gleeson

"He was very eager to learn and willing to listen. He picked up a lot and showed that he is aggressive in recovering the ball, while also being calm on the ball"

Vincent Kompany gives his assessment of Romeo Lavia while managing Anderlecht in 2021

Romeo LAVIA

(Southampton)

With only two Manchester City appearances to his name, Southampton supporters may have been entitled to ask: "Romeo who?" particularly after their club spent an initial £10.5 million on the 18-year-old.

Yet Lavia arrives at St. Mary's with a burgeoning reputation. Signed from Anderlecht in 2020 with a glowing reference from former City skipper Vincent Kompany, the Belgian was only 16 when he established himself in the club's Under-23 side. He was named Player of the Season as they won the Premier League 2 title in 2020-21, before making his senior debut against Wycombe Wanderers in last season's Carabao Cup.

A defensive midfielder with an impressive passing range, his first-team prospects at the Etihad were harmed by the arrival of Kalvin Phillips. But at the age of 18 he has shown impressive bravery by seeking Premier League football elsewhere.

QR CORNER

Kashima Antlers' Everaldo scores a sensational 89th-minute equaliser against Cerezo Osaka in the J.League.

Use a tablet or smartphone to scan the QR code

Emilio LAWRENCE
(Everton)
Manchester City are already targeting the next 16-year-old midfielder for their academy, with Lawrence expected to leave Everton's academy to join City.

Simon ADINGRA
(Brighton & Hove Albion)
The latest graduate of the Right To Dream Academy, 20-year-old Ivorian striker Adingra joins the Seagulls from Danish side FC Norsdjaelland.

Malcolm EBIOWEI
(Crystal Palace)
A graduate of Chelsea, Arsenal and Rangers' academies, the 18-year-old forward played 16 Championship games for relegated Derby County last year, earning a move to Palace.

Valentin CASTELLANOS
(New York City)
After 13 goals in 16 games this season, the 2021 MLS Golden Boot winner will begin his European career at City Football Group's Spanish club, Girona.

Ousmane DEMBELE
(Barcelona)
One of the most protracted contract negotiations was finally resolved when the 25-year-old French winger penned a new two-year deal at Camp Nou.

Kenan YILDIZ
(Juventus)
The Italian giants held off competition from Barcelona to capture the highly-promising Turkey Under-17 attacking midfielder after his deal with German champions Bayern Munich expired.

Jim HOLDEN

AT THE HEART OF THE GAME

Ten Hag the man to turn United around

When the chance comes you simply don't say no to becoming manager of Manchester United, however daunting the task of rejuvenating a major sporting institution consumed by chaos and despair might look. Cynics and sceptics, and maybe his best friends too, will have told Erik ten Hag this job is mission impossible – but still he could not resist the siren call.

The end of the last Premier League season found United at their lowest ebb since the 1970s. They endured a shambolic campaign that saw the hapless, over-promoted Ole Gunnar Solskjaer finally removed as manager, before stand-in boss Ralf Rangnick was reduced to hopeless irrelevance.

Five years have passed without a trophy and the club's supporters are restless; furious with the mostly absent American owners who value commercial success far more than winning football silverware. Patience levels are close to zero, a nightmare situation for a new manager who does not arrive with superstar credentials.

It could be a one-way ticket to disaster for Ten Hag.

But my feeling is that he looks the right kind of choice for Manchester United right now – a manager of some achievement at Ajax, but with a burning ambition to prove himself with one of the giants of English football.

The Dutchman is widely admired for his work in Amsterdam over the past few seasons and two years prior to that as reserve team coach at Bayern Munich under the wing of Pep Guardiola. He has strength of purpose, strength of character, and a clear, modern, attacking football philosophy. Former players speak highly about his leadership, both in terms of on-field strategy and individual man-management. He is a serious football man.

On his first day in the job, he instituted a tough training and discipline schedule. Well, of course he did. Football clubs don't succeed with lax nice-guy regimes. Supreme fitness is essential, a mandatory first requirement. It always has been. The decision by Ten Hag was a good sign to a dressing room rumoured to be full of factions and discord.

In the hotseat ...Erik ten Hag

He will have to answer many more questions with the same strength, however, to transform the fortunes of United.

After several years of wasting hundreds of millions of pounds in the transfer market, the club reportedly have allowed Ten Hag a relatively limited spending budget. Can he use it wisely?

His instinct, a classic path for a new manager, appeared to be trusting in talent he already knows, with Dutch midfielder Frenkie de Jong his instant first-choice target, alongside other Dutch talents like Feyenoord defender Tyrell Malacia. Yes, this is a safety-first policy, but surely preferable to the previous policy of celebrity signings.

One of those famous-name celebrity deals, clearly, was last summer's acquisition of Cristiano Ronaldo. A huge instant dilemma confronted Ten Hag on his arrival at Old Trafford: what to do with the ageing, egotistical legend who remains a prolific goalscorer. It would be a risk to let him leave, but perhaps an even greater risk to try to integrate Ronaldo into his new team.

Last season's indulgence of Ronaldo was reported to have had a negative impact on the performances of English trio Jadon Sancho, Marcus Rashford and team captain Harry Maguire. A crucial question for Ten Hag is whether he can revitalise their confidence and performances – and eliminate the sense of aimless drift that enveloped United during the past 12 months.

The history of Ten Hag suggests he has the mentality to find good answers to all of these football questions. He is a serious man.

Another issue is less certain, but one that will also be vital. Can he play the game outside the game, inspire the supporters and charm the media? It's foolish to say this doesn't matter, because in modern football it does.

Jurgen Klopp's charisma, his rapport with the fans, was a huge ingredient in the transformation of Liverpool. The intense, heart-on-his-sleeve passion of Antonio Conte delights fans at all the clubs he has managed. Ten Hag's public personality has been more guarded – and the view here is that must change if he is to be successful at Old Trafford.

> It would be a risk to let Cristiano Ronaldo leave, but perhaps an even greater risk to try to integrate him into his new team

Ghana

World Cup hopes boosted by swathe of players switching their international allegiance to the West African nation

A common joke among Ghanaian citizens is that the Black Stars have made more "signings" in the summer transfer window than many top European clubs. Such is the excitement among fans, that some believe a new golden generation is in the making.

While such witticism on social media ends just there, the fact is that Ghana are currently at their strongest in years, in terms of both squad depth and quality, following a slew of new additions to the national team.

On July 5, the Ghana Football Association (GFA) announced that five players – Inaki Williams, Tariq Lamptey, Stephan Ambrosius, Patric Pfeiffer and Ransford-Yeboah Konigsdorffer – were now available for selection after successfully completing their nationality switches.

Two days later, GFA president Kurt Okraku delivered more thrilling news: Southampton's Mohammed Salisu, who previously wanted nothing to do with the Black Stars, had also agreed to return to the fold.

And, just like that, a spineless team that was heading nowhere as recently as January now looks well-stocked ahead of the World Cup. There is no denying that qualifying for Qatar has done Ghana a load of good. Without that, the West Africans would have lacked the clout to attract Williams and Lamptey, who play in La Liga and the Premier League respectively with Athletic Bilbao and Brighton & Hove Albion.

The GFA's decision to deploy an all-hands-on-deck approach turned out to be the most seminal point in the team's rebuild.

For a side that started the year at its lowest ebb – exiting AFCON 2021 at the group stage without winning a single game, and blighted by petty squabbles between the FA and government over which direction to take – the last seven months have been nothing short of analeptic.

This positive turnaround began with the appointment of a technical team with idiosyncratic managerial backgrounds. As chaotic as that sounds on paper, Otto Addo (head coach), Chris Hughton (technical advisor), and assistants Mas-Ud Didi Dramani and George Boateng have combined to give Ghana the hard reset that it badly needs.

> Just like that, a spineless team that was heading nowhere as recently as January now looks well-stocked ahead of the World Cup

Not only did the quartet deliver World Cup qualification, but each played their role in ensuring the Black Stars go to Qatar with the strongest squad possible.

GFA boss Okraku set the wheels in motion with his tour of Europe earlier this year. His policy was simple: any player of Ghanaian descent would be on his radar, provided they were good enough to improve the Black Stars.

In April, Okraku touched down in Spain and held talks with Williams' father over his sons' possible nationality switch. The discussion proved fruitful and Inaki was open to the idea of representing the country of his parents. His younger brother, Nico, insisted he needed time to decide.

A trip to England followed, where Okraku convinced Salisu into a U-turn. Meanwhile, Boateng, the coach of Aston Villa's U23s, worked on Lamptey. He and Chris Hughton met the Seagulls right-back on separate occasions, selling the idea of how Lamptey would be better served playing for Ghana than England, where Kyle Walker, Reece James and Trent Alexander-Arnold are all ahead of him in the pecking order.

For Konigsdorffer, Ambrosius and Pfeiffer, Addo was the mastermind behind their switch from Germany. Unlike Inaki and Lamptey, who are expected to command starting spots,

Instrumental... GFA president Kurt Okraku

***La Roja* cap...Inaki Williams played one game for Spain in 2016**

Vincent Kompany

The pressure is on for the ex-Anderlecht coach in his new job at EFL club Burnley

Ex-Young Lion...Lamptey in action for England U21s

the trio are seen as future prospects.

The latest converts join a long line of players to commit themselves to Ghana. Emmanuel Gyasi, who grew up in Italy, made his debut last year; one-time Belgium international Denis Odoi is expected to go to the World Cup, while goalkeeper Jojo Wollacott – who played a key role in the team reaching Qatar – was joined by fellow English-born star and former Bristol City team-mate Antoine Semenyo in the squad earlier this year.

The GFA remains keen on Arsenal's Eddie Nketiah, who has been handed the Gunners' famous No.14 shirt after signing a new deal at the Emirates, and Chelsea winger Callum Hudson-Odoi, but neither player is quite ready to give up on England. Nketiah is the Under-21s' all-time top scorer, while Hudson-Odoi has three senior caps for the Three Lions. Enlisting them before the World Cup will be a challenge.

Addo, though, insists he's content with his current options.

Of course, there are doubters. Some believe the new additions are simply opportunists, citing the case of Kevin-Prince Boateng, who picked and chose which matches he played after riding on the back of Ghana's successful World Cup campaign in 2010 to secure a move to Milan.

The true test of the loyalty of these players will come after Qatar 2022. But an impressive showing at the tournament will go a long way to convincing the newcomers to stick around. With Ghana now arguably boasting their strongest squad in almost a decade, there is every chance of that happening.

Emmanuel Ayamga

Vincent Kompany's coaching career might still be fresh, but in Burnley he has found a club that is not so dissimilar from his old club, Anderlecht, at least when surveying the annual accounts: the Clarets labour under a huge debt, even more so after relegation from the Premier League. Ever since owners ALK Capital completed a leveraged takeover last year, Burnley's finances have nosedived spectacularly. Kompany said the club's "extreme transparency" convinced him.

Anderlecht's balance sheet had been precarious for years, but when the club, in 2018, landed Kompany, an in-house icon and longstanding luminary at Manchester City, it was a major coup. A disciple of Pep Guardiola, he promised progressive football. But amid endless boardroom shuffles and a limited spending budget, Kompany, whose insistence on a possession game relented, never convinced. His upbeat attitude and excuses, arguing he had a young squad, became grating in the eyes of the club hierarchy. After three seasons of mediocre results, his time came to a natural conclusion at a club that demands trophies.

For all the talk of long-term vision, a hackneyed concept in football, Burnley will not allow Kompany as much time to deliver. A smooth talker, Kompany said: "We know how to grow the club. It's not rocket science. We want to put together a team with a good mix of experienced players and guys with potential. You have to set a clear course and be given time. Although keeping calm is often difficult in football."

At Burnley, Kompany needs to rebuild as well, with James Tarkowski, Ben Mee, Nathan Collins and Nick Pope among the players to have left Turf Moor so far. Last season, the club had the oldest squad in the Premier League. In the Championship, Kompany will rely on new signings – midfielders Josh Cullen, once of Anderlecht, Scott Twine and Samuel Bastien – to provide fresh impetus.

There will be more familiar faces in the backroom staff. Kompany is surrounding himself with staff members from his time in Brussels: assistant manager Craig Bellamy, goalkeeping coach Jelle ten Rouwelaar, first-team coaches Bram Geers and Floribert Ngalula, and performance analyst Richard Bredice.

> "You have to set a clear course and be given time. Although keeping calm is often difficult in football"
>
> **Kompany discusses his new job**

Under pressure... Kompany oversees a pre-season friendly with his new club

Lessons learnt at Anderlecht aside, Kompany wants Burnley to play possession-based football. It suggests that his interpretation of the game remains unchanged. It's a strategy that is risky, like his move to the English second tier. What if the Belgian fails? Promotion to the Premier League is hardly straightforward and a downturn in results might leave Burnley in even greater trouble. That would leave the career of Kompany, who claimed he had multiple other offers, on a dangerous slide, one where his credentials as a former Manchester City great will no longer suffice to get the next role.

Being the first non-British or Irish coach at Turf Moor – where patience will run out quickly – represents a true test for Kompany. The outcome could well define his future as a coach.

Samindra Kunti

Christophe Galtier

Former title-winning manager of Lille links up with Luis Campos at Paris Saint-Germain

With the slogan "Dream Bigger" plastered across the Parc des Princes, only a few French players in their squad and having spent nearly €400 million on two forwards not so long ago, Paris Saint-Germain under Qatari ownership don't accurately represent Ligue 1. But new coach Christophe Galtier does. An uncharacteristically low-key appointment, Galtier epitomises France's stoic, results-focused football of the last decade and has far more in common with Ligue 1's unfashionable, journeyman coaches than any of QSI's previous managers. Nevertheless, his arrival signals a revolution.

Lacking an overarching football philosophy, unlike the game's elite managers with whom he'll now compete, the 55-year-old's 13 years as a coach have been chameleonic. Having rescued Saint-Etienne from relegation in 2010, Galtier's positive team, led by a young Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang, were third-highest scorers in the 2012-13 season, winning the French Cup. However, as resources dwindled and talent was sold, *Les Verts* slowly morphed into Ligue 1's dullest side, even though a European challenge was admirably maintained every season until Galtier's 2017 exit.

Joining Lille, Galtier again narrowly prevented relegation before surging up the table, miraculously finishing second the following campaign. Aided by Luis Campos, Lille unearthed cheap talent across the globe and played with an intensity and pace rarely seen from Galtier's Saint-Etienne teams. The combination of Campos' scouting genius and Galtier's precise coaching – maximising talent and out-foxing opposing coaches are his specialities – brought the 2020-21 title.

With Campos long gone and the club changing owners amid financial struggles, Galtier's departure was already being discussed before securing the title. An ambitious Nice project beat Lyon to Galtier's signature last summer but the right formula, both above and below the coach, was never found.

A talented squad free from European distractions were favourites for second. But balance was a constant concern as Galtier stubbornly stuck with the 4-4-2 that helped Lille's title charge in an attempt to squeeze strikers Kasper Dolberg and Andy Delort, and his only real creator, Amine Gouiri, into the team. Despite boasting Ligue 1's meanest defence, Nice were regularly stumped by well-organised sides. Galtier became ever more defensive, resulting in a dour French Cup final defeat to Nantes.

Even without Parisian interest, Galtier was likely to leave Nice this off-season having publicly lambasted the club's transfer dealings, leading director of football Julien Fournier to give a sensational interview in *L'Equipe* heavily criticising Galtier's performance. Nice scraped into Europe on the final day, finishing fifth.

> Galtier could find himself out of his depth, having never been subject to the pressure he'll experience in Paris

Underperforming at Nice, Galtier owes his latest chance at silverware, like much of his Lille success, to Campos. The Portuguese sporting director was reportedly appointed after discussions with Kylian Mbappe (the pair are friends having overlapped at Monaco) as the Parisians desperately tried to convince their star to stay. Campos was given absolute decision-making power and, as well as picking the new 3-5-2 formation, he identified former partner Galtier as PSG's prime coach target.

Widely regarded as the game's best pound-for-pound sporting director, capable of repeatedly finding high-level talent in Europe's backwaters, Campos built title-winning sides at Monaco and Lille. As Campos says, he is "in love with signing players for between €0m to €6m, who will be worth much more in the future." Yet although Campos' skills here are unmatched, PSG rarely sign such players and don't have the time to develop them.

Few Campos signings, despite reaching a level that didn't seem possible upon their arrival at Monaco or Lille, ever reached the standard PSG require in the latter stages of the Champions League. Still, Campos'

Maximising talent ...can Galtier help bring the best out of PSG's big stars?

Advisor...Luis Campos worked with Galtier at Lille

common sense approach has been refreshing, implementing a squad code of conduct, focusing more on the academy and ending the club's pursuit of Ousmane Dembele amid fitness and attitude concerns. But, like Galtier, he may simply not fit a club of PSG's size.

QSI were concerned that Campos' recommendation to hire Galtier at the expense of Mauricio Pochettino would leave them with a less experienced coach with a worse CV at a cost of €20m. Yet they have placed their trust in the Portuguese and, as a result, are now in the midst of an ideological revolution.

Clearly influenced by Campos, president Nasser Al Khelaifi told *Le Parisien* that PSG needed to be "realistic", and he would consider changing that "Dream Bigger'" slogan. Such a sudden jump across football's ideological spectrum shows just how disastrous last season was.

Humiliated in Europe by Real Madrid, domestic form grew stale, with Mbappe often relied upon to snatch points late, while Neymar and Lionel Messi were routinely whistled by fans. Few titles have felt so underwhelming. A complete overhaul was the obvious option.

An astute strategist and a charismatic leader, Galtier could find himself out of his depth having never been subject to the pressure he'll experience in Paris or coached players of Mbappe and Messi's statue. That's not to mention his dire, if brief, Champions League record.

Thanks to Campos and Galtier's revolution, PSG will increasingly resemble a Ligue 1 team and Campos' humility and common sense ideas are desperately needed but, in the end, not "Dreaming Bigger" could be QSI's biggest mistake yet.

Adam White

Demanding...managing Mbappe, Messi and Neymar could prove tough for Galtier

Damiano Tommasi

Ex-Italy, Roma and Hellas Verona midfielder enters the world of politics

Around 20 years ago, Roma's stadium announcer, Carlo Zampa, developed his own trademark way of naming the line-up to the home supporters. He would begin by screaming the player's number, then his nickname (invented by Zampa himself), followed by his first name, before the crowd replied with the player's surname.

While the nicknames of Francesco Totti, Gabriel Batistuta and Walter Samuel reflected their playing abilities – "Golden Boy," "Batigol" and "The Wall" respectively – the moniker chosen for central midfielder Damiano Tommasi said more about the man himself: "*Anima Candida*", pure soul.

Duly elected... Tommasi attending the Italian Football Awards in his previous role as head of the AIC

There was always something a little different about the Italy international, who played 351 times in a ten-year career at Roma, without ever fitting the stereotype of a footballer.

In 1994 he had already bucked a football trend by choosing to undertake civil service instead of military service, becoming the first professional footballer to do so. "I don't want to serve my country by holding a rifle," he declared.

Some years later, towards the end of his time at Roma, he missed the entirety of the 2004-05 season with a knee injury. The following campaign he insisted on receiving no more than the Italian minimum wage. Why? "Because I love football," he said. The gesture was met with a papal blessing.

Now, he has defied expectations once again by becoming the mayor of Verona.

Heading a centre-left coalition in a traditionally right-wing city, Tommasi's election was achieved against the odds. In the final round of votes he took 54 per cent against incumbent Federico Sboarina, overcoming a coalition that included two parties representing Italy's right-wing populist movement: the *Fratelli d'Italia* (Brothers of Italy) and *Lega Nord* (Northern League).

Born in Negrar, 15km from Verona, Tommasi began his professional career with Hellas Verona in Serie B in 1993, before joining Roma in 1996. While many supporters were not immediately convinced, Tommasi was a player that gave everything on the pitch, and Roma fans soon came to fall in love with him.

It was a romance that peaked during the 2000-01 season when Roma won the *Scudetto*. Alongside Totti, Samuel and Batistuta, coach Fabio Capello labelled Tommasi the most important player: "He always thinks about others," said the former England manager. "He does not know the word selfishness. His whole life, on and off the pitch, was spent in the service of others."

> **Heading a centre-left coalition in a traditionally right-wing city, Tommasi's election was achieved against the odds**

These are the characteristics that made Tommasi not only want to run for mayor but to convince the people of Verona to vote for him.

Before 2020, his only previous administrative experience was as president of the Italian Footballers' Association (AIC).

As the final vote approached, he was met with increasingly hysterical opposition: "Tommasi wants to make Verona a transgender capital," declared Sboarina. The people of Verona were not swayed, instead placing their trust in the Pure Soul.

Tommasi has plenty to do in his new job, not least removing Verona's label as a "fascist city". But if his footballing past is anything to go by, he will give everything to make it happen.

Emanuele Giulianelli

eyewitness

Emanuele Giulianelli reports

ITALY

Berlusconi and Galliani driving Monza forward

Monza have been promoted to Serie A for the first time in their history. That in itself is incredible news, but it is made even more remarkable by the identity of the club's bosses: Silvio Berlusconi and Adriano Galliani.

No, this is not a joke. No, we have not gone back 30 years, to when the duo were all the rage at Milan while building one of the strongest and most successful teams in football history.

In September 2018, Berlusconi was enjoying lunch at his mega Villa San Martino in the tiny municipality of Arcore, 30km from Milan, together with Galliani. Now past 80 years of age, the three-time Italian prime minister had been out of football for more than 12 months, having sold his beloved red-and-black toy to the Chinese

businessman Yonghong Li and his group of investors for €740 million after 31 years of ownership.

"Why don't we take Monza? The Colombo family want to sell it", said Galliani. After a brief pause, Berlusconi replied: "Adriano, go and do it". By the end of the day, they owned the club.

At the time, Monza were playing in Serie C, still recovering from a series of disasters. The club had spent most of its history in Serie B, coming closest to promotion in the 1979 play-offs. A year later they were bought by their former player-turned-businessman Valentino Giambelli, who would own the club for the next 19 years. In 1997 he signed a formal agreement with Berlusconi and Galliani for Monza to become a feeder club to Milan, with a number of the Serie A club's top youth prospects joining on loan.

The men in charge...Silvio Berlusconi (L) and Andrea Galliani (R) *Photo: Foto Buzzi*

It was not a popular move. Giambelli departed the club two years later amid criticism over his relationship with Galliani. What followed was years of financial instability: bankruptcies, relegations, name changes and broken promises from a series of new owners defined the club's 21st century existence. When Berlusconi and Galliani arrived in 2018, they found a club in desperate need of a change of fortunes.

Monza, a city of around 120,000 inhabitants, is known around the world primarily for its Formula 1 racing circuit. Yet within four years, Berlusconi and Galliani had put the football team on the map too, securing two promotions to take them from Serie C to Serie A.

If anything, reaching the top tier – via a play-off victory over Pisa – came later than expected. The 2020-21 campaign began with Monza the overwhelming favourites to win Serie B after a number of high-profile signings including Mario Balotelli, Kevin-Prince Boateng and Gabriel Paletta, all of whom had previously played for Berlusconi's Milan.

Yet that level of star power was not enough to secure promotion, as Monza lost to Cittadella in the play-off semi-finals. Manager Christian Brocchi paid for the failure with his job, and was replaced by his former Milan team-mate Giovanni Stroppa. A more pragmatic outfit, without Balotelli or Boateng, proved more successful.

"The Serie A project started a long time ago," says Stroppa. "When the current owners bought Monza in Serie C, they first set up a team to win the Serie C championship, then to win the Serie B championship and, with my entry last season where we tried to improve on the year before. We did it.

"On the last day of the regular season, we lost the opportunity to go directly to Serie A, [but] we played in the extraordinary play-offs, winning four games out of four."

The former midfielder, who played for Monza from 1987 to 1989, is one of 28 players enrolled in the club's Hall of Fame, an illustrious list that also features Pierluigi Casiraghi, Luigi Di Biagio, Patrice Evra, Daniele Massaro, Alessandro Costacurta and Nils Liedholm. After starting his coaching career in Milan's academy in 2010, Stroppa managed the likes of Pescara, Spezia, Sudtirol, Foggia and Crotone before returning to Monza in July 2021.

> The club's Hall of Fame is an illustrious list that features Pierluigi Casiraghi, Luigi Di Biagio, Patrice Evra, Daniele Massaro, Alessandro Costacurta and Nils Liedholm

"I found an environment that was disappointed with the lack of promotion," he says. "In fact, at the beginning of the season, when the

Destination paradise ...Monza's open top bus parade *Photo: Foto Buzzi*

team was struggling to get going, there was a lot of negativity towards us, but I understand that. After such a disappointment, it is not easy to look ahead with clarity, especially when you see some initial difficulties: you risk mistaking a normal phase of team building as a negative moment.

"All I did was put my head down, roll up my sleeves and work."

While working with a duo like Berlusconi and Galliani might seem challenging, Stroppa insists that he has had no issues since reuniting with his former employers.

"It's a relationship quite different from the one I had at Milan as a footballer. When I started my coaching career with the *Rossoneri*, they were always there, but I was in the youth teams so I did not have a direct connection with them. I must say that this professional relationship has intensified along the way and it's excellent from all points of view. I feel privileged, because hearing Galliani every day and feeling him so close is certainly an extraordinary resource.

"Berlusconi always has some kind of advice for me, before and after the games: usually he tells me his considerations on what was going to be done or on what had just happened in the match. Sometimes I wonder if it's really true that I'm their coach, if I really work for their club. I feel really privileged to be in this place."

Il Capitano... **Galliani welcomes new captain Matteo Pessina** *Photo: Foto Buzzi*

That strong relationship may be tested this season though, with high demands expected of Stroppa and his team. Battling against relegation is not on the agenda; Galliani has stated that the team should be aiming for tenth place in their debut season, while Berlusconi is dreaming of European qualification and even a *Scudetto* challenge.

> Galliani has stated that the team should be aiming for tenth place in their debut season, while Berlusconi is dreaming of European qualification and even a *Scudetto* challenge

"We must not forget that four years ago this team was in Serie D and did not have all the economic resources it has now," says Stroppa. "The growth is daily; every day there are works in progress to modernise our sports centre in Monzello, modernise the stadium, and put in place any piece in the organisation so that this team has everything at our disposal to work at our best.

"We are definitely growing."

While talk of title challenges and Europe from Berlusconi and Galliani demonstrates an admirable level of ambition, it could also prove to be naive in the extreme. The rest of Serie A should not be underestimated or taken lightly, as Stroppa is keen to point out: "I coached in Serie A two seasons ago so I'm very fresh from this experience."

With that in mind, the coach has bolstered his squad with knowhow at this level. 34-year-old defender Andrea Ranocchia arrives from Inter with over 200 Serie A appearances to his name, while midfield loanees

The manager...Giovanni Stroppa *Photo: Foto Buzzi*

Promotion party...Berlusconi celebrates with the Monza players *Photo: Foto Buzzi*

Stefano Sensi and Matteo Pessina have recent experience in both the Italian top flight and the national team, the latter scoring twice at Euro 2020. The recruitment also has continuity in mind, with Andrea Colpani, Michele Di Gregorio, Davide Bettella, Mattia Valoti and Pedro Pereira all signing permanently after arriving on loan last year.

"Our transfers have been based on players who have already had experience in this league," adds Stroppa, "but this is the year zero for us and, therefore, certainly our first thought is to be safe as soon as possible."

Whether safety can be secured remains to be seen, but the journey is sure to be an exciting one. And if it is achieved, you can be sure that Berlusconi and Galliani will celebrate in style.

Play-off victory...Monza players lift the Serie B play-off trophy *Photo: Foto Buzzi*

eyewitness

Ben Bocsak reports

HUNGARY

MTK ready to rebuild after relegation

As Hungary recorded historic victories over England in the UEFA Nations League earlier this summer, everyone at MTK Budapest was brimming with pride. The nation's success felt like one of their own.

Five MTK academy graduates featured in the games – the most out of any club in Hungary – including 17-year-old Zalan Vancsa, who became the youngest player to debut in the national team since 1918.

Vancsa, who was acquired by the City Group in a record deal for the Hungarian league during the January window, is among an exciting group of players – alongside Andras Schafer (Union Berlin), Dominik Szoboszlai and Peter Gulacsi (both RB Leipzig) – to have emerged from MTK's academy in recent years. But this is not a recent phenomenon; developing young players has always been ingrained in the club's philosophy.

One of the most successful clubs in the country with 23 league titles, MTK have provided five out of the ten youngest players to ever feature for the Hungarian national team and they regularly lead the charts for the most minutes provided to academy players – not just in Hungary, but in Europe.

Founded in 1888, MTK first emerged as a superpower in Hungarian football under the guidance of Jimmy Hogan. The Englishman heralded MTK's greatest-ever period, winning nine consecutive titles (five of them under Hogan) between 1917 and 1925.

"The philosophy Hogan instilled during his time at MTK remains our model," Zsolt Szekely, the club's academy director, tells *World Soccer*. "Many people have said to us we play like Barcelona, but the truth is Barcelona play like MTK, because it was Hogan who first came up with the concept of the pass and move."

Hogan also developed the club's culture of playing youngsters. His key pillars at MTK were teenagers Jozsef Braun and Gyorgy Orth – the previous two youngest MTK graduates to feature for the national team before Vancsa.

After Hogan's departure, his legacy endured with players like Nandor Hidegkuti, Karoly Sandor, Jozsef Zakarias and Mihaly Lantos emerging from MTK during the country's golden era in the 1950s.

As communism's grip tightened, though, MTK's dominance fell. Between 1958 and 1987, MTK endured a 29-year barren spell without a league title. The club regained some of its glory years in the late 1990s and early 2000s, winning three league titles in six years, but since the 2000s it's at academy level where MTK has prospered.

Rising star...Zalan Vansca (R) was signed by City Football Group club Lommel SK in January

In 2001, MTK founded the country's first-ever elite football academy, named after club legend Karoly Sandor, and have dominated youth development at national level ever since.

"Everything is built at this club to develop and produce players," says Szekely, who has been at the academy since the beginning. "It's simply part of our DNA. From the cleaning staff to the academy coaches, everyone shares our philosophy."

Since the inception of the academy, MTK have produced 22 Hungarian international players and the club's graduates have moved to Liverpool, Internazionale, RB Leipzig, Red Bull Salzburg, Tottenham Hotspur, Porto, Manchester City, Genoa, Leicester City, Parma and Ajax, among others.

The club has also broken the Hungarian transfer record twice: first, with the sale of Krisztian Nemeth to Liverpool in 2007, and then with Vancsa this year.

"I owe the club a lot. My years in the academy were extremely valuable," Nemeth says with pride. "They did everything to prepare me to become a professional."

His transfer to Liverpool, accompanied by his MTK team-mate, Andras Simon, also led to the English giants striking a partnership with MTK that lasted six years and helped in the metamorphosis of the club's current academy director, Zsolt Szekely.

"They supported us and had observers in the academy who spotted potential talent and brought them over to Liverpool for trials," Szekely explains.

Liverpool signed eight MTK players either on professional contracts or loan deals between 2007 and 2013. The co-operation also saw Szekely spend a few valuable months in England, where he was given the opportunity to coach with Oldham Athletic and observe Liverpool's academy in the flesh.

"It was a gold mine for me. I made contacts I am still proud of today, such as Steve Cooper and Rodolfo Borrell. I also coached James Tarkowski at Oldham. Few Hungarian managers can say that they coached an England international, so it was a great period for me."

In the end the partnership fizzled out, and while no MTK graduate appeared for Liverpool's first team, the likes of Peter Gulacsi and Krisztian Nemeth have gone on to enjoy successful careers with the national team. Meanwhile, MTK coaches like Szekely could take plenty of lessons from the experience.

"It was a challenging time in England. I had to adapt to a different style, but ultimately it was hugely beneficial on a personal and professional level," Szekely says, looking back.

After returning from England,

Breeding ground ...MTK's Nandor Hidegkuti Stadium in Budapest

Szekely worked his way up at MTK to become the academy director, and MTK have enjoyed continued success in player development under his reign.

However, at first-team level, the club has struggled to compete. In 2008, when MTK won the league title with 20 of the club's 25-man squad graduating from the academy, it felt like the start of a golden era but the club failed to build on the success and was relegated just three years later.

Last season, MTK suffered relegation for the fourth time since 2010, and the latest setback has led to wholesale changes in the squad and staff room.

"We lost our identity a little," MTK's club manager, Balazs Polyak, says. "But now, with a new coach and a different squad, we can bring that MTK DNA back to the club."

Former MTK player and academy coach, Gyorgy Bognar, who was voted Hungary's Manager of the Season in 2021-22, took a step down from first division side Paks to return to the club this summer, and his exciting football has lured academy graduates like Krisztian Nemeth back to MTK.

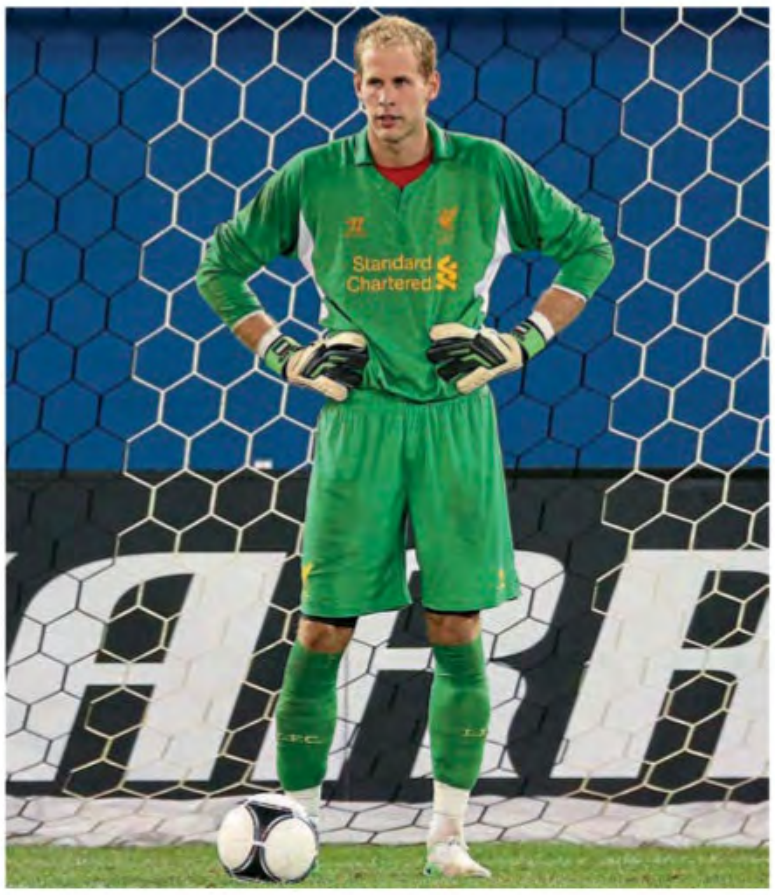
"When I spoke to the coach, I was certain the club is heading in the right direction," Nemeth says.

Szekely agrees: "The coach has MTK in his blood, and he knows the ethos of our club. I believe he can help us and our young players."

Nemeth is not the only former MTK graduate to return to the squad. Bognar's backroom staff at senior and academy level is made up of a contingent of former players, including several from the club's 2008 league title success, who are now guiding the next generation of MTK players.

"Having people working here who grew up around the club helps continue our ethos and creates strong unity – without that we cannot succeed," Polyak says.

> "We lost our identity a little. But now, with a new coach and a different squad, we can bring that MTK DNA back to the club"
>
> **MTK's club manager, Balazs Polyak**



Anfield imports...Peter Gulacsi and Krisztian Nemeth moved to Liverpool as part of the MTK partnership during the 2000s

Made in MTK... academy graduate Andras Schafer celebrates scoring against Germany at Euro 2020

Relegation to the second division – where only Hungarian citizens are allowed to play – can also be an opportunity to integrate MTK's academy graduates into the first team.

"The best way we can profit from relegation is by playing youngsters in a division that provides a good environment for them to develop," Szekely says.

There is a tangible recent precedent for the club's current crop to be inspired by, too. During MTK's last two campaigns in the second division, Andras Schafer (Union Berlin) and Szabolcs Schon (FC Dallas) emerged as stars of the team and later earned lucrative moves abroad.

"They will both tell you that the season in the second division was very helpful for their development and they are examples for our current players," Szekely continues.

It won't just be in the second division where MTK's youngsters will hope to catch the eye next season. The club's Under-19 side once again qualified for the UEFA Youth League, which thrust Vancsa into the limelight last season, and has earned MTK international recognition.

"For Vancsa to sign abroad, the Youth League was a major influence to get his name out there, and it has also put us on the map again.

"Playing international games like this is very important for player development. It helps them to integrate into adult football and also gives them an opportunity to catch the attention of scouts," Szekely says.

Unlike at first-team level, where teams like MTK have been left behind by European elites, the club has found some parity in the UEFA Youth League. Last season, MTK's U19s beat Sparta Prague in the first round and narrowly lost out (in a 3-1 scoreline) to Genk, who then obliterated Chelsea 5-1 later on in the competition.

"We don't have the means to compete with European clubs at senior level, so the Youth League is the next best thing to get our players to compete in Europe," Polyak explains.

Next season, Szekely's aim is to continue building on the club's success.

"We want to get promoted to the first division and, of course, we want to get as far as possible in UEFA Youth League. The more games we play in the competition, the more it benefits us and our young players, and the more we can grow."

With players like Nemeth in the first team to guide them and a manager in Bognar who knows the club's philosophy, everything is set up for success and for more players, like Szoboszlai and Vancsa, to emerge from the academy in the coming years.

"I see a lot of potential in our young players. I think they have the quality to help us gain promotion and then go on to have successful careers. It's going to be an exciting period," Nemeth concludes.

Knows the club ...MTK manager Gyorgy Bognar

THE PREMIER LEAGUE AT 30

This August marks the 30th anniversary of the start of the Premier League. **Keir Radnedge** looks back at how English football has been transformed by the competition

History was made on September 8, 1888. That was the date of the very first league football match. But history, it seems, has been rewritten. Now the revered date of reference is August 15, 1992: the kick-off of the Premier League – a brave new football world generated by a financial and technological revolution through which English football leads the way once more.

Back in the late 19th century British adventurers took association football to a sporting world in which the pupils would become the masters. Now football has come home and the English Premier League is the world's number one, and by a very long way. Its worldwide television revenues and audiences dwarf the pull of Spain, Germany and Italy. The modern, post-Bosman era of open transfer markets has enabled the Premier League to suck all the greatest talent from its rivals and keep them subservient.

This translates into even greater popularity, even greater financial power and extends the gap between the Premier League and the rest. Critics feared a destruction of the ethos of the game with its all-important competitive balance, feared the death of the romance of the eternal optimist that "there's always the next match." Yet travel the world, scan the beaches and the bars and Premier League club shirt replicas are everywhere to be seen.

But while a league or competition may boast the most advanced televisual and technological intellect and the most dynamic marketing strategies, if it lacks a matching wealth of eye-catching sporting talent it will ultimately fail.

This is the greatest achievement of the Premier League. Its popularity owes more than anything else to the hundreds of individuals whose footballing talent – not forgetting managerial expertise – has, and continues to, mesmerise billions around the world.

Today's fanbase may barely understand the scale of transformation of the dishevelled, disowned, disaster-damned English game of the 1970s and 1980s into the super-trendy, marketing miracle of today.

For that, English football should first thank the "suits" who got it right – despite many more who got it wrong – and then the stars, such as Eric Cantona and David Beckham, Thierry Henry and Dennis Bergkamp, Alan Shearer and Harry Kane, under the guidance of managers and coaches such as Sir Alex Ferguson, Arsene Wenger, Jose Mourinho and, lately, Jurgen Klopp and Pep Guardiola.

Scan those names: iconic figures from a scattering of football generations. This is the Premier League's most magical secret ingredient – the inbuilt motor of perpetual renewal. Changing places, changing faces, all keep the Premier League not merely rolling along but defying depressive economic trends in the world at large.

The year 1992 was the one in which the so-called "Big Five" (then Arsenal, Everton, Liverpool, Manchester United and Tottenham) decided the only route to survival was to break away from the four-division Football League.

Timing was everything. The 1989 Hillsborough disaster had led to the enforced introduction of all-seater venues, which were filled by the attraction of star foreign players easily available after the Bosman ruling of the European Court of Justice in 1995.

English clubs' ability to outspend all their foreign rivals was fuelled initially by the commercial explosion generated from the satellite television revolution. Media mogul Rupert Murdoch's newly-created BSkyB paid what was considered a staggering £304 million for an initial five-year deal to live action. Now domestic TV pays a remarkable £1.6bn per year and reap the same again in international rights.

Not all the bricks were yet in place.

Equally important in building the Premier League was the accident of a corporate revolution fomented by the radical restructuring of the UK's economy and society by Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. Her Conservative government of the 1980s undertook a wholesale fire sale of Britain's family silver. In corporate terms that meant the corporations that controlled electricity,

gas, water, railways, post office, etc.

Football kicked the same ball downfield and chased after it. Esteemed colleague Brian Glanville famously once labelled it the "Greed is Good League." So greedy, in fact, that critics now contend the Premier League survives as possibly the UK's one ultra-successful expression of 1980s trickle-down, free-market economics.

Individual responsibility rests, perhaps most notably, on Irving Scholar. A smart, entrepreneurial child of his age, Scholar was a Tottenham fanatic who quietly bought up voting rights until he took control of Spurs. Scholar was the first owner to turn his club into a Stock Exchange-quoted company. Selling shares generated new millions to fuel transfers and wages.

Scholar and his ilk did not foresee the consequence of "going public". Now their clubs were at the mercy of even bigger financial fish that would take them into private ownership. This was the billions-generating welcome mat for a plethora of foreign owners from Russia, China, the Middle East and the United States, from Roman Abramovich to the Glazers.

Their gradual, marauding influence and ultimate takeover of the Premier League means that no fewer than 16 of the 20 clubs are now foreign-controlled.

This influence of foreign money is illustrated by the competitive history of the Premier League's first 30 years. The inaugural season, 1992-93, ended up with a top five of Manchester United, Aston Villa, Norwich City, Blackburn Rovers and Queens Park Rangers. The latter three are all now in the lower divisions. Only United have gone from strength to strength, winning the Premier League a record 13 times under Sir Alex Ferguson.

Ferguson's record establishes him as one of the greatest club managers in football history but, arguably, as influential in the on-the-pitch rise of the Premier League was former Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger. The Frenchman, ridiculed in newspaper headlines initially as "Arsene Who?", revolutionised English football with his progressive approach to training, diet and nutrition. Captain Tony Adams, commander of the Gunners' ruthless back four, credited Wenger with enabling him to extend his career.

TV love-in... television has been at the heart of the Premier League's rise

The Premier League also brought about a more positive football context than had been seen for years. In 1990 England reached the semi-finals of the World Cup and UEFA lifted its five-year post-Heysel ban on English clubs playing in European competition. Leeds United, under Howard Wilkinson, were the last Football League champions; Wilkinson, for better or worse, thus remains the last Englishman able to make that boast.

The Premier League launched in 1992-93 with 22 clubs, reduced to 20 in 1995-96. Brian Deane of Sheffield United scored the first goal in a 2-1 win over Manchester United; Eric Cantona scored the first hat-trick (against Tottenham); Manchester City's Niall Quinn was the first player shown a red card; and Chelsea's Ian Porterfield the first manager sacked.

United, with Martin Edwards as shrewd an owner as was Ferguson as manager, commanded the last decade of the 20th century and first years of the 21st. They won the league in eight of the first 11 campaigns, interrupted only by Blackburn Rovers once and Wenger's Arsenal twice. This Class of '92 version of United, with Beckham, the Neville brothers, Paul Scholes and Co, provided a devastating riposte to the jibe from BBC *Match of the Day* pundit Alan Hansen that "you can't win anything with kids."

They did. Not once. But again and again.

Then, out of the blue, came Roman Abramovich. His money-no-object influence was memorably captured in the words of Arsenal's executive vice-chairman David Dein in 2003: "Abramovich has parked his Russian tank in our front garden and is firing £50 notes at us." Dein was one of the most wily and insightful of the new brand of Premier League bosses: as ever, he was right on the money. Literally.

Abramovich, until his expulsion from English football as a consequence of recent UK sanctions, oversaw a massive transfer market spend of £2bn-plus which was repaid with 19 national and international trophies. Managers came and went at high speed, even the "Special One" Jose Mourinho, while double-winner Carlo Ancelotti collected the league and FA Cup double at the end of his first season in charge and the sack at the end of his second.

Initially Dein and Wenger's Arsenal held the upper hand. In 2003-04 their "Invincibles" became the only club to complete a Premier campaign without losing a single game and the first since Preston North End in the first league season of 1888-89. Thierry Henry top-scored with 30 goals, Robert Pires added a further 14 and the Gunners

Battles in the dugout...managerial bouts have defined the Premier League

PREMIER LEAGUE INFLUENCES

SIR ALEX FERGUSON
Rangers player, successful manager of Aberdeen, briefly Scotland coach, then era-defining boss of Manchester United. In 26 years at Old Trafford he and United won 38 trophies, including 13 Premier titles, five FA Cups, and two Champions League titles.

RUPERT MURDOCH
Australian-born American media mogul, owner of hundreds of book, news, print and broadcasting outlets around the world including *The Sun*, *The Times*, *The Australian*, now-defunct *News of the World*, *Wall Street Journal*, HarperCollins plus Sky TV until 2018.

DENNIS BERGKAMP
Dutch forward who invested Arsenal with a progressive attacking style, winning three Premier League titles and four FA Cups before retiring in 2006. Helped open the floodgates for the influx of top foreign talent into league.

PEP GUARDIOLA
Champions League midfielder with Barcelona as a protégé of Johan Cruyff before emulating his mentor as a manager. Successful with Barca and Bayern Munich before taking over Manchester City in 2016 and turning them into the Premier League's dominant force.

DAVID BECKHAM
The Premier League's first real celebrity. Teenage star turned worldwide style icon after winning ten major trophies with Manchester United and finding further success in Spain, France and the US. Ambassador for the London 2012 Olympics but also Qatar's hosting of the World Cup.

ROMAN ABRAMOVICH
Russian oligarch who bought financially-battered Chelsea in 2003 and invested more than £2bn, turning the Blues almost overnight into one of the most high-spending and successful clubs in world football. Sold the club this year after being hit by UK sanctions.

finished 11 points clear of runners-up Chelsea with Manchester United third and Liverpool fourth.

These four clubs dominated the next decade unchallenged until beyond 2008 when a new financial powerhouse arrived in the shape of the state of Abu Dhabi and its purchase of Manchester City.

By then the value of the FA Cup had been diminished by the juggernaut. In the 98 years between 1888-89 (Preston) and 1986-87 (Liverpool) the league and FA Cup double had been achieved only five times. Since the start of the Premier League it has been achieved seven times including five doubles in a nine-season spell between 1994 and 2002.

The league may be defined as three managerial eras: Ferguson v Wenger, Mourinho v Everyone, and Pep Guardiola v Jurgen Klopp.

High in the main stand at Old Trafford a derisive banner used to display the number of days since Manchester City had won anything at all. That is now long gone. United have remained complacently content with their status as a commercial monolith while City are winning 14-8 in terms of major prizes since the appearance of Sheik Mansour and his men.

Deep pockets are not everything.

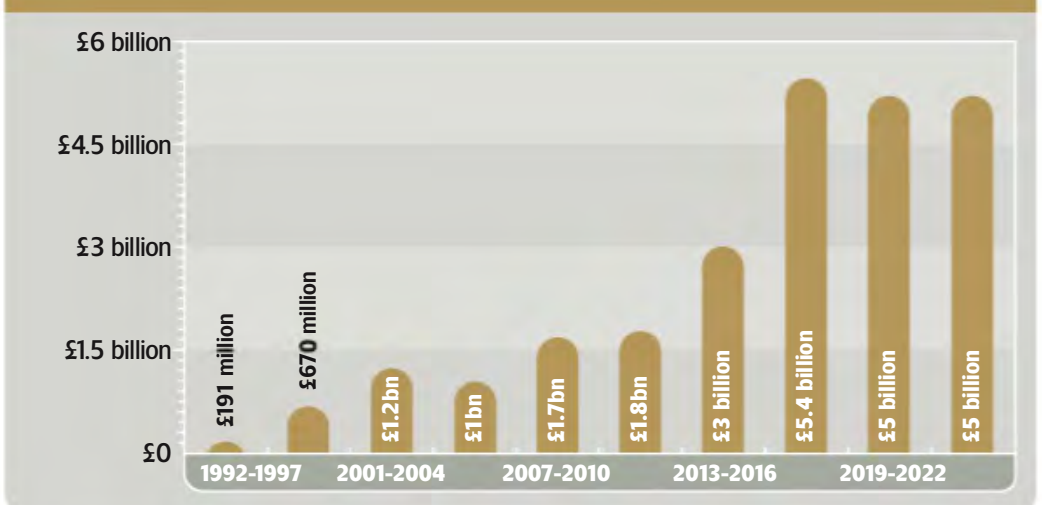
World Soccer's two-part bookazine on the history of the Premier League, The Prem Era, is available to buy at: shop.kelsey.co.uk/world-soccer-presents-magazine

The appointment of Guardiola in 2016 has brought City nine prizes at home and abroad but the challenge of Klopp's Liverpool has been maintained not so much by money as by superb judgement in the transfer market, and a manager whose character and personality have provided supreme inspiration – to the sum total of six trophies, including the Premier League in 2019-20.

The two men's rivalry personifies the ultimate attraction of the Premier League. As Richard Scudamore, the ex-CEO who talked up TV revenues year after year, once defined its success: "It's very competitive, it's very compelling and that's what people want to watch."

The simplest game, indeed.

DOMESTIC TELEVISION INCOME



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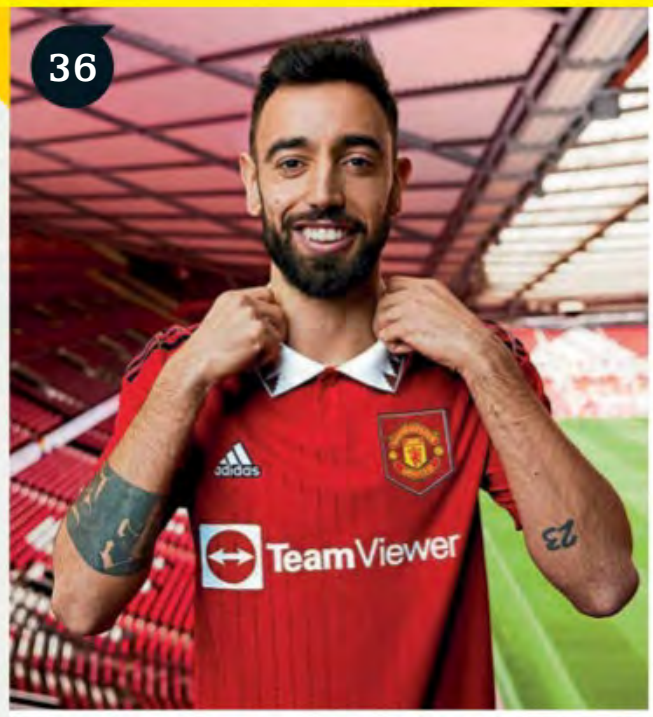
SEASON PREVIEW

2022-23



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No ordinary season

World Cup disruption looms large over unique Premier League campaign

PLAYERS TO WATCH

JULIAN ALVAREZ
(Manchester City)
While the Argentine youngster is not the most celebrated arrival into City's front-line this summer, do not be surprised to see Pep Guardiola place great faith in Alvarez, who scored 42 goals in his last two years at River Plate.

CONOR GALLAGHER
(Chelsea)
Last season's spell at Crystal Palace was the third season in a row that Gallagher has impressed on loan away from Chelsea. Now aged 22, this campaign may be make-or-break for the England midfielder at Stamford Bridge.

BRENDEN AARONSON
(Leeds United)
With the arrivals of Aaronson and Rasmus Kristensen from Salzburg, plus Tyler Adams from RB Leipzig, Jesse Marsch is clearly hoping to accelerate Leeds' development into a reincarnation of the Red Bull project.

GABRIEL JESUS
(Arsenal)
Having worked closely with the Brazilian as Manchester City's assistant manager, Mikel Arteta has high hopes for Gabriel. Regular starts may yield his best Premier League goalscoring season to date and could thrust him back into Brazil's XI.

CARNEY CHUKWUEMEKA
(Aston Villa)
The 18-year-old midfielder demonstrated his potential by being named in the Team of the Tournament as England won the U19 Euros. Made two league starts last season and should see plenty more this campaign.

Title race... Manchester City and Liverpool remain favourites for the Premier League trophy

On the evidence of last season, Manchester City and Liverpool are far ahead of the rest of the Premier League, and more than worth their places in a conversation about the competition's finest teams of all time. In a normal season, it would be fair to expect them to continue their battle for trophies across four competitions once again.

But this will not be a normal season. The final weekend of action before the World Cup interrupts proceedings comes on November 12-13. How will players perform in the build-up? Will there be a drop-off in intensity as players seek to avoid injuries ahead of the tournament, or will the prospect of earning a spot on the plane inspire greater performances? And what about the tournament hangover after the Premier League resumes on Boxing Day? How long will it take for players to shake off both the mental and physical toll of a World Cup, whether it is successful or not?

Judging by last season, when several of England's Euro 2020 stars suffered slow or downright poor starts to the season, there will surely be a drop-off in performance.

> The final weekend of action before the World Cup interrupts proceedings comes on November 12-13. How will players perform in the build-up?

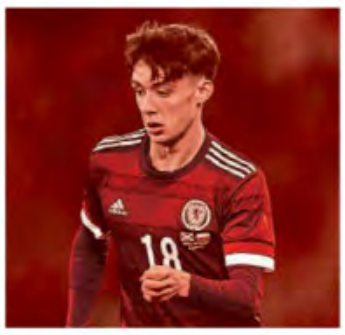
Antonio Conte's Tottenham Hotspur, on a high after qualifying for this season's Champions League and one of the bookmakers' favourites to go closest to City and Liverpool, will be fearful of the impact that the World Cup could have on them. Last season, after returning from the Euros, Harry Kane scored just twice before Christmas, and a similar post-Qatar drop-off will be costly. There will be similar burnout concerns for South Korea talisman and Golden Boot winner Son Heung-min, as well as new signings Ivan Perisic and Richarlison. Conte has put his squad through a gruelling pre-season programme, the effectiveness of which will define their season.

Burnout worries ...Antonio Conte and Harry Kane

Chelsea, last season's third-placed team, also have a squad packed with potential World Cup stars, including new signings Raheem Sterling and Kalidou Koulibaly. Of the Blues' regular starters, only Italy midfielder Jorginho will be sure of a break while the competition plays out, with Kai Havertz, N'Golo Kante, Mateo Kovacic and Edouard Mendy all set to be involved for Germany, France, Croatia and Senegal.

Sterling could well provide the goals that Romelu Lukaku failed to, but like Kane he started last season slowly, with just two goals by the end of November.

Meanwhile, Arsenal might look at the World Cup as something of a blessing.



AARON HICKEY
(Brentford)
The former Hearts full-back had two productive years with Bologna, convincing Brentford to sign him for £14m plus add-ons. Will provide attacking thrust for the Bees, having scored five Serie A goals from left-back last season.

DOMINIC SOLANKE
(Bournemouth)
The one-time England international has failed to impress in the Premier League for Bournemouth and Liverpool in the past. After 29 Championship goals last season, he will aim to prove that he is not a flat-track bully.

JAMES MADDISON
(Leicester City)
What must the Foxes midfielder do to get Gareth Southgate's attention? A personal best of 12 goals and eight assists in last season's Premier League was not enough; a repeat performance will be much harder to ignore.

BRENNAN JOHNSON
(Nottingham Forest)
Back in January, Forest rejected an £18m bid from Brentford for Johnson, and were more than vindicated as the academy graduate helped them secure promotion. A special talent, he is likely to attract further interest this campaign.

FLYNN DOWNES
(West Ham United)
Hammers boss David Moyes has previous when it comes to recruiting talent from the Championship, and wasted no time in swooping for Downes. A like-for-like Mark Noble replacement – both as a midfielder and lifelong West Ham fan.

Mikel Arteta can take comfort from Norway (Martin Odegaard) and Scotland (Kieran Tierney) failing to qualify, while Brazilians Gabriel Magalhaes and Gabriel Martinelli are not guaranteed to go to Qatar. The same can also be said of English playmaker Emile Smith Rowe, as well as new £30 million man Fabio Vieira, who is yet to be capped by Portugal.

Yet patience must be running thin for Arteta, and another failure to finish in the top four will surely not be tolerated, particularly after his biggest-name signing to date: £45m-forward Gabriel Jesus from Manchester City.

As for Manchester United, the other team most likely to challenge the top two, new manager Erik ten Hag has plenty to consider besides the World Cup. Indeed, the Red Devils will hope that Jadon Sancho, Marcus Rashford and Anthony Martial are called up for international duty in November, as that would indicate that they have rediscovered their best form.

Big job... Manchester United manager Erik ten Hag

> At this stage, it is impossible to say whether Erik ten Hag will be successful at Old Trafford

At this stage, it is impossible to say whether Ten Hag will be successful at Old Trafford. The Dutchman hopes to build his side around the midfield partnership that took his Ajax side to a Champions League semi-final, but his pursuit of Frenkie de Jong has been drawn out and Donny van de Beek is yet to convince. Meanwhile, Cristiano Ronaldo's future has cast a shadow over pre-season. Opinion is split as to whether the team would be more or less effective without him, but uncertainty helps nobody.

All of which means that the door may be open for a fit, well-organised outfit with few internationals to upset the top six. Europa League semi-finalists West Ham are the most obvious candidates, while Leicester City will also hope to bounce back from a disappointing campaign last time around.

Yet in spite of all that, it is still hard to look beyond the top two. Both sides need a slight recalibration – Manchester City as they incorporate Erling Haaland, and Liverpool as they move on from Sadio Mane – but the spines of Pep Guardiola and Jurgen Klopp's sides remain unchanged.

It is also worth pointing out that their most likely sources of goals – Haaland and Mohamed Salah – will enjoy a World Cup break thanks to their countries' failure to qualify. For 22-year-old Haaland, that will mean extra time on the training ground absorbing Pep Guardiola's complex tactical instructions, while Salah will simply relish the time off – last year the scintillating form that he showed before Christmas tailed off after AFCON, with 22 of his 31 goals coming in the first half of the season.

City's signing of Haaland and Salah's Liverpool contract extension demonstrated significant statements by the Premier League's top two. They have shown no signs of letting up their dominance, and the task of keeping up with them remains a daunting one. But, in a unique season, anything could happen.

Jamie Evans

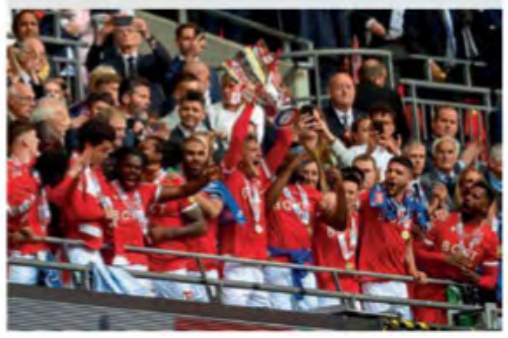
Statement signings... Erling Haaland and Mohamed Salah

PROMOTED TEAMS

FULHAM
The Cottagers obliterated last season's Championship, scoring over 100 goals on the way to the title, with Aleksandar Mitrovic netting a record-breaking 43. Former Hull City, Watford and Everton manager Marco Silva will need to tweak his approach to avoid another immediate relegation for Fulham.

BOURNEMOUTH
Bournemouth will return to the Premier League after two years in the Championship. With many of the players from the Cherries' 2019-20 relegation still at the club, reinforcements will be needed. For manager Scott Parker, this is his second top-flight campaign, having failed to keep Fulham up in 2020-21.

NOTTINGHAM FOREST
Forest's long-awaited return to the Premier League was secured via the EFL play-offs. Steve Cooper, who impressed both while winning the Under-17 World Cup with England and guiding Swansea to the 2020-21 play-offs, has added to his exciting and well-organised side with several eye-catching transfers.



Team by team

ENGLAND

ARSENAL
Manager: Mikel Arteta
Key Arrivals: Vieira (Porto), Turner (New England Revolution), Marquinhos (Sao Paulo), Gabriel Jesus (Man. City), Zinchenko (Man. City)
Key Departures: Lacazette (Lyon), Guendouzi (Marseille)
Prediction: A busy summer has seen the Gunners significantly upgrade their squad. The returning William Saliba will also be one to watch after his standout season on loan in France with Marseille. Real contenders for a top-four finish.

ASTON VILLA
Manager: Steven Gerrard
Key Arrivals: Coutinho (Barcelona), Diego Carlos (Sevilla), Kamara (Marseille), Olsen (Roma), Augustinsson (Sevilla)
Key Departures: Targett (Newcastle), Hourihane (Derby), Kalinic (Hajduk Split), Trezeguet (Trabzonspor)
Prediction: Ahead of his first full season at Villa, Gerrard has been backed in the transfer market with some intriguing new signings. Moulding them into a top-half side could be his toughest managerial challenge to date.

BOURNEMOUTH
Manager: Scott Parker
Key Arrivals: Rothwell (Blackburn), Fredericks (West Ham)
Key Departures: Cahill (released), Brady (Preston), Kilkenny (Stoke)
Prediction: Unless reinforcements can be added, the Cherries will struggle. Many of last season's stars were in the squad that was relegated in 2019-20, although captain Lloyd Kelly, who only had a limited role in that team due to injuries, marshalled the best defence in the Championship last season.

BRENTFORD
Manager: Thomas Frank
Key Arrivals: Hickey (Bologna), Lewis-Potter (Hull), Strakosha (Lazio), Mee (Burnley)
Key Departures: Eriksen (Man. Utd)
Prediction: After an impressive start to last season, the Bees struggled once their novelty factor wore off. Christian Eriksen was decisive in their safety; his departure may prove to be equally important this time around.

BRIGHTON & HOVE ALBION
Manager: Graham Potter
Key Arrivals: Enciso (Libertad), Adingra (Nordsjaelland)
Key Departures: Bissouma (Tottenham), Molumby (West Brom)
Prediction: More good things should be expected of Potter's well-coached outfit, though the departure of midfield enforcer Yves Bissouma, and left-back Marc Cucurella continually being linked with Manchester City are concerning.

CHELSEA
Manager: Thomas Tuchel
Key Arrivals: Sterling (Man. City), Koulibaly (Napoli)
Key Departures: Rudiger (Real Madrid), Christensen (Barcelona), Lukaku (Inter)
Prediction: Kalidou Koulibaly and Raheem Sterling arriving to replace Antonio Rudiger and Romelu Lukaku represents good business from a football point of view, if not a financial one. If he lasts the season Tuchel will be Chelsea's longest-serving manager since Jose Mourinho's first spell.

CRYSTAL PALACE
Manager: Patrick Vieira
Key Arrivals: Doucoure (Lens), Richards (Bayern Munich), Johnstone (West Brom), Ebiowei (Derby)
Key Departures: Kelly (released)
Prediction: A number of late goals cost the Eagles a top-half finish last season, but Vieira showed enough in his first campaign as a Premier League manager to suggest that relegation can be comfortably avoided once again.

EVERTON
Manager: Frank Lampard
Key Arrivals: Tarkowski (Burnley)
Key Departures: Richarlison (Tottenham), Kenny (Hertha Berlin), Tosun (Besiktas), Delph (released), Sigurdsson (released)
Prediction: Fans at Goodison Park got fully behind last season's scrappy survival, but they will not tolerate another relegation battle. Replacing Richarlison will be key to improving Everton's fortunes this time around.

FULHAM
Manager: Marco Silva
Key Arrivals: Palhinha (Sporting), Pereira (Man. Utd)
Key Departures: Zambo Anguissa (Napoli), Carvalho (Liverpool), Seri (Hull), Hector (released), Mawson (released), Christie (released)
Prediction: Is there anything to suggest this season will be any different from Fulham's last two relegations, or that manager Silva can fare better in his fourth crack at the Premier League? Not currently. The fans' mood has also been damaged by a ticket price hike.

LEEDS UNITED
Manager: Jesse Marsch
Key Arrivals: Aaronson (Salzburg), Kristensen (Salzburg), Adams (RB Leipzig), Roca (Bayern Munich), Gyabi (Man. City), Sinisterra (Feyenoord)
Key Departures: Phillips (Man. City), Raphinha (Barcelona), Roberts (QPR)
Prediction: Marsch's coaching ability will come under close scrutiny as he seeks to rebuild after the departures of Kalvin Phillips and Raphinha. The arrivals are encouraging; how successfully the American integrates them remains to be seen. Failure may cost him his job.

LEICESTER CITY
Manager: Brendan Rodgers
Key Arrivals: None
Key Departures: None
Prediction: The Foxes lost their way last season, finishing a disappointing eighth after consecutive top-four challenges. A quiet summer (so far) indicates that Rodgers backs his talented squad to return to challenging the top six.

LIVERPOOL
Manager: Jurgen Klopp
Key Arrivals: Carvalho (Fulham), Nunez (Benfica), Ramsay (Aberdeen)
Key Departures: Minamino (Monaco), Mane (Bayern Munich), Origi (Milan), Williams (Nott'm Forest)
Prediction: Assuming that Mo Salah continues to score at a prolific rate, there will be no pressure on new boy Darwin Nunez to hit the ground running, so you can expect Jurgen Klopp to introduce the Uruguayan – as well as his other new signings – to the side gradually. Liverpool fans may draw hope from recent history: the last time they went into a season having missed out on the previous title by a single point, they went on to win the league.

MANCHESTER CITY
Manager: Pep Guardiola
Key Arrivals: Haaland (B. Dortmund), Phillips (Leeds), Alvarez (River Plate), Ortega (Arminia Bielefeld)
Key Departures: Gabriel Jesus (Arsenal), Zinchenko (Arsenal), Sterling (Chelsea), Fernandinho (Athletico Paranaense)
Prediction: Undoubted favourites to retain their crown. The only potential bump in the road could be the teething problems that come with switching from a false-nine to an out-and-out centre-forward in Erling Haaland. If he is slow to adjust, it will not be easy to resort to last season's approach without Sterling or Jesus. But that is a big if; the Norwegian has given every indication that he is a phenomenon.

MANCHESTER UNITED
Manager: Erik ten Hag
Key Arrivals: Martinez (Ajax), Eriksen (Brentford), Malacia (Feyenoord)
Key Departures: Pogba (Juventus), Matic (Roma), Lingard (Nott'm Forest), Cavani (released), Mata (released), Henderson (Nott'm Forest)
Prediction: While a coach as talented as Ten Hag should improve United, improving on last season's sixth-place will be difficult with the five sides ahead of them all strengthening. In what is likely to be a transitional season for the coach's new-look team, the best route to Champions League football may well be via the Europa League.

NEWCASTLE UNITED
Manager: Eddie Howe
Key Arrivals: Targett (Aston Villa), Pope (Burnley), Botman (Lille)
Key Departures: Woodman (Preston), Hayden (Norwich), Clark (Sheffield United), Hendrick (Reading)
Prediction: Some smart signings will allow Eddie Howe to improve on last season's 11th place, but not by much. Competing for Europe remains a target for future seasons, although a proper tilt at a domestic cup would go down extremely well with the supporters.

NOTTINGHAM FOREST
Manager: Steve Cooper
Key Arrivals: Awoniyi (Union Berlin), Williams (Liverpool), Niakhate (Mainz), Richards (Bayern Munich), Hennessey (Burnley), O'Brien (Huddersfield), Toffolo (Huddersfield), Henderson (Man. Utd), Aguilera (Alajuelense), Biancone (Troyes), Lingard (Man. Utd)
Key Departures: Samba (Lens), Zinckernagel (Olympiakos), Grabban (released), Figueiredo (Hull)
Prediction: An eagerly-anticipated return to the top flight, a highly-regarded coach and a number of intriguing signings combine to make Forest this season's most exciting newcomers. Despite coming up via the play-offs, they are the most likely survivors of the three promoted sides.

SOUTHAMPTON
Manager: Ralph Hasenhuttl
Key Arrivals: Bazunu (Man. City), Lavia (Man. City), Bella-Kotchap (Bochum), Aribo (Rangers), Lis (Altay)
Key Departures: Forster (Tottenham), Long (released)
Prediction: Currently, only Jurgen Klopp and Pep Guardiola have managed in the Premier League longer than Ralph Hasenhuttl, who has never finished higher than 11th place. A slow start could see the Austrian become the season's first managerial casualty.

TOTTENHAM HOTSPUR
Manager: Antonio Conte
Key Arrivals: Bissouma (Brighton), Forster (Southampton), Richarlison (Everton), Perisic (Inter), Spence (Middlesbrough), Lenglet (Barcelona)
Key Departures: Bergwijn (Ajax), Carter-Vickers (Celtic)
Prediction: This could prove to be a season of two halves for Spurs. World Cup burnout is a genuine concern, with so many key players heading to Qatar, but a number of top signings and the momentum of last season could make them contenders until Christmas.

WEST HAM UNITED
Manager: David Moyes
Key Arrivals: Aguerd (Rennes), Areola (PSG), Downes (Swansea)
Key Departures: Fredericks (Bournemouth), Yarmolenko (Al Ain), Noble (retired)
Prediction: Last season's run in the Europa League almost certainly cost the Hammers a top-six finish, but with smart signings already completed and more likely to come their squad could be much stronger this time around. They'll be aiming for the top six again.

WOLVES
Manager: Bruno Lage
Key Arrivals: Hwang (RB Leipzig), Collins (Burnley)
Key Departures: Vinagre (Sporting), Hoever (PSV), Saiss (Besiktas), Marcal (Botafogo), Ruddy (Birmingham), Silva (Anderlecht)
Prediction: With the best defensive record outside last season's top four, and the worst attacking record outside the bottom three, it is abundantly clear where Wolves need to improve. Bruno Lage may need to simply take the handbrake off for his team to start scoring more goals, although a fit Pedro Neto could help immensely.

No more 'bling-bling' PSG

French champions ready for a fresh approach under new regime

After an underwhelming season, Paris Saint-Germain's summer overhaul has been defined by a drastic change in tone. "Dreaming is one thing, reality is another," explained club president Nasser Al Khelaifi to *Le Parisien*. "These days we have to be realistic. We don't want to be flashy or bling-bling anymore, it's the end of the glitter." Mirroring the City of Light's glamour, Paris' ostentatious "bling-bling" philosophy has defined the QSI era and Al Khelaifi's lurch across football's ideological spectrum was astonishing.

Al Khelaifi was, in fact, repeating new de-facto sporting director Luis Campos' ideas for running the club after his arrival amid the sacking of coach Mauricio Pochettino. Although it's uncertain whether Campos' elite scouting ability will be useful in Paris, he's instigated a common sense approach and appointed the QSI era's most low-key coach: Lille's 2020-21 title-winner, Christophe Galtier. With the "glitter" gone, and Galtier, who worked with Campos at Lille, perhaps out of his depth, a diverse chasing pack will be hoping Parisian dominance will also be gone.

Best placed to challenge are Galtier's former club Nice, now led by the returning Lucien Favre after two

New era...Nasser Al Khelaifi presents Christophe Galtier to the media

PLAYERS TO WATCH

CASTELLO LUKEBA
(Lyon)
Ligue 1's breakout youngster of last season, the calm and commanding teenage centre-back could enter 2023 as Europe's leading young player in his position if his rapid development continues at the same pace.

KYLIAN MBAPPE
(Paris Saint-Germain)
Authoritative and often majestic last season, with many of his rivals ageing, Mbappe has the chance to finish the season as the continent's leading player. Convincing him to stay was PSG's biggest triumph for some time.

VANDERSON
(Monaco)
Few impacted Ligue 1 last season like the pacy 21-year-old after a £10m January move from Gremio. Equally comfortable at right-back or right attack, the exciting Brazilian could be next summer's major transfer saga.

LOVRO MAJER
(Rennes)
Bearing a striking resemblance to fellow countryman Luka Modric in appearance and playing style, the graceful midfield creator was unplayable at his best last season. More consistency is needed this time around.

ALEXANDRE LACAZETTE
(Lyon)
After just four goals in 30 Premier League games for Arsenal last season, the returning 31-year-old needs to prove he's the player that left OL in 2017. How he fits alongside fellow striker Moussa Dembele remains uncertain.

Comeback...Lucien Favre (R) is back at Nice after previously managing the club from 2016 to 2018

years in charge of Borussia Dortmund. Galtier only spent one year in charge of the Cote D'Azur club, and may well have left them regardless of PSG's interest due to his fiery relationship with the club's hierarchy. Despite considerable firepower, Nice lacked balance and creativity throughout last season and were easily stumped by well-organised mid-table sides. Galtier, losing faith in his attack, erred towards stoicism that resulted in a listless French Cup final defeat to Nantes.

> "These days we have to be realistic. We don't want to be flashy or bling-bling anymore, it's the end of the glitter"
>
> **Nasser Al Khelaifi, PSG president**

The more positive Favre has much to work with, however. Nice would have finished fourth were it not for a point deduction and were favourites to take second for long periods, despite Galtier's issues. Moving away from Galtier's ill-fitting 4-4-2, Favre has goals in skilful striker Andy Delort, subtlety from the highly-regarded Amine Gouiri, Khephren Thuram's emerging midfield dynamism and the legacy of Galtier's well-drilled, league-leading defence. More creativity is a must but ambitious owners INEOS will surely provide.

Monaco finished last season as Ligue 1's strongest side after nine consecutive wins before being robbed of a tenth and second spot thanks to Lens' final day stoppage-time equaliser. Replacing the harshly sacked Niko Kovac, Philippe Clement initially struggled to translate his ideas as he searched for balance. Unlike Galtier, however, the former Brugge boss found the right midfield

LIONEL MESSI
(Paris Saint-Germain)
An underwhelming first season with PSG still produced 11 goals and 15 assists in 34 games and, after signs of improvement in the spring, much will be expected once again. However, at 35, he may finally be slowing down.

YOUSSOUF M'CHANGAMA
(Auxerre)
Long a standout Ligue 2 player at Guingamp, the technically gifted 31-year-old midfielder impressed at January's AFCON with Comoros and managed 16 assists last season. He finally gets a Ligue 1 chance.

MATTEO GUENDOUZI
(Marseille)
Now a full France international, the former Arsenal man's belligerent style suits Marseille perfectly and he became a midfield driving force under Jorge Sampaoli. His leadership will be needed more than ever this season.

YOUSSOUF FOFANA
(Monaco)
Out of favour under Niko Kovac due to his jovial attitude and some erratic form, the talented, versatile midfielder returned to his best under Philippe Clement and will assume much of the responsibility left by the departed Tchouameni.

KHEPHREN THURAM
(Nice)
Perhaps the only real success of Christophe Galtier's short reign, the dynamic midfielder grew in stature throughout last season and looks set to become the club's midfield general under returning coach Lucien Favre.

formula, leading to some exacting performances. The form of Wissam Ben Yedder, Aurelien Tchouameni and others accelerated, with the 3-0 drubbing of PSG a highlight.

However, with lynchpin Tchouameni's €80m move to Real Madrid and a small sample of positive form, the long-term effectiveness of Clement's Monaco is uncertain. Nevertheless, their talent and potential is obvious. They'll need to be finely tuned, but astute reinvestment of the Tchouameni fee and continued coaching precision from Clement could push PSG if Galtier should stumble.

After edging into second place and the Champions League group stage on last season's final day, Marseille are already close to squandering their chance to challenge, starting pre-season in total disarray. Jorge Sampaoli, who produced a constantly evolving but largely effective unit, shockingly quit after early transfer targets slipped away, while key players – including on-loan defender William Saliba and midfielder Boubacar Kamara – have departed.

Appointing the "courageous and intensive football" of Igor Tudor is an attempt to directly replace Sampaoli, but it's a major risk. Untested in Ligue 1 and the Champions League, Tudor's record over the last decade with the likes of Hajduk Split, Galatasaray and Udinese is patchy before a promising campaign with Verona last season.

Crucially, Sampaoli's hasty exit ended hopes of stability. Instead, OM's ever-bubbling self-defeatism could lead to another implosion at a club where every coaching change brings institutional crisis. With a weakened squad and a risky managerial appointment, the boisterous Stade Velodrome could soon turn on the team with Monaco, Lyon, Nice and Rennes all better placed to capitalise on any PSG sluggishness.

Rennes, meanwhile, could be best placed to usurp PSG having played Ligue 1's best football last season, but their claim comes with caveats. Although sporting director Florian Maurice unearthed some left-field talent last summer – most notably the balletic Croatian midfielder Lovro Majer – he will likely need a repeat. So compelling was Bruno Genesio's flowing style, all his key players are attracting interest from wealthier clubs. Keeping their spine would make Rennes a major threat but, despite his team tallying 82 goals last season, Genesio will need to find consistency, especially against his rivals, to realise his side's potential in results as well as entertainment.

Shock exit...former Marseille manager Jorge Sampaoli

> Last year's runners-up Marseille are already close to squandering their chance to challenge, starting pre-season in total disarray

After a disastrous eighth place and underwhelming cup displays, Lyon coach Peter Bosz starts the season under pressure. However, returns of French internationals Corentin Tolisso and Alexandre Lacazette combined with no European football makes a talented OL squad a dangerous proposition. With Lucas Paqueta the only likely major departure and president Jean-Michel Aulas active in the transfer market, if Bosz can tighten his often-porous midfield, second is a realistic goal.

Under QSI, PSG have never entered a season so uncertain. With their "bling-bling" ideology under attack from Campos and an untested coach, the chasing pack will be justifiably dreaming of gazumping PSG. However, with Kylian Mbappe and Lionel Messi staying to lead the new era, a new champion remains unlikely. As Al Khelaifi said: "Dreaming is one thing, reality is another."

Adam White

Last year's third-placed team...Monaco

PROMOTED TEAMS

TOULOUSE
Former MK Dons striker, and Ligue 2's 20-goal top scorer, Rhys Healey will lead a versatile attack as Toulouse return to Ligue 1 after two years away. Coach Philippe Montanier will be confident of goals after four players hit double figures last term, but defensive experience is desperately needed.

AJACCIO
The Corsicans' form has fluctuated wildly under long-serving coach Olivier Pantaloni and automatic promotion was an overachievement, even in a weak year for Ligue 2. Lacking goals and defensive quality, Ajaccio's squad, full of second-tier veterans, will likely need a major overhaul to compete, particularly with four teams being relegated this campaign to prepare for an 18-team format in 2023-24.

AUXERRE
A second-tier specialist, coach Jean-Marc Furlan has been relegated in his last four Ligue 1 campaigns. However, the creativity of Mathias Autret and Gauthier Hein and midfield stability from Hamza Sakhi and Birama Toure brings optimism. Defensive reinforcements and 17-goal striker Gaetan Charbonnier leaving his own poor Ligue 1 record behind will be crucial.

Team by team

FRANCE

AJACCIO
Manager: Olivier Pantaloni
Key Arrivals: Mangani (Angers), Hamouma (Saint-Etienne), Alphonse (Maccabi Haifa), Vidal (Montpellier), Spadanuda (Aarau)
Key Departures: Kalulu (Lorient), Mattoir (Almere City), Elisor (Seraing)
Prediction: Despite adding much-needed Ligue 1 nous, the Corsican club's squad remains underpowered having overachieved in a weak second tier. With no one hitting double figures last season, goals will be a major concern for the relegation favourites.

ANGERS
Manager: Gerald Baticle
Key Arrivals: Fofana (Le Havre), Eneme-Ella (Brighton), Abdelli (Le Havre), Blazic (Ferencvaros), Hunou (Minnesota United), Sima (Brighton)
Key Departures: Cho (Real Sociedad), Fulgini (Mainz), Cabot (Lens), Thomas (Caen), Magnani (Ajaccio), Lage (Brest)
Prediction: Coach Gerald Baticle's dynamic reimagining of traditionally stoic Angers quickly ran out of steam last term, barely passing the 40-point mark. With swathes of stalwarts departing, Baticle will have to temper his aggressive style to keep his team out of trouble.

AUXERRE
Manager: Jean-Marc Furlan
Key Arrivals: Costil (Bordeaux), Pereira (Lens), Bain (Brest), Ruiz-Atil (Barcelona), M'Changama (Guingamp)
Key Departures: Arcus (Vitesse), Lloris (Le Havre)
Prediction: As seen in the play-off win over Saint-Etienne, Auxerre have sufficient guile, threat and organisation to compete. Second-tier specialist coach Jean-Marc Furlan will be quietly confident of survival despite finishing third in Ligue 2 last campaign.

BREST
Manager: Michel Der Zakarian
Key Arrivals: Fadiga (Heracles Almelo), Dembele (Celtic), Lage (Angers)
Key Departures: Bain (Auxerre)
Prediction: Some streaky form resulted in a flattering 11th-place finish last season, but a repeat is unlikely in a competitive bottom half following the loss of some key loan talent. Keeping his side afloat will be the chameleonic journeyman Michel Der Zakarian's trickiest challenge to date.

CLERMONT
Manager: Pascal Gastien
Key Arrivals: Andric (Dinamo Zagreb), Gonalons (Granada), Borges (Genk)
Key Departures: Bayo (Lille), Abdul Samed (Lens), Zedadka (Lille)
Prediction: A fast start to their first-ever top-flight campaign, and disastrous seasons from others, kept Clermont up with just 36 points. They're unlikely to be so fortunate this year as key players start to leave. With 14-goal talisman Mohamed Bayo joining Lille, relegation looms.

LENS
Manager: Franck Haise
Key Arrivals: Openda (Club Brugge), Buksa (New England Revolution), Samba (Nottingham Forest), Abdul Samed (Clermont), Cabot (Angers)
Key Departures: Jean (Inter Miami), Doucoure (C. Palace), Clauss (Marseille)
Prediction: Despite some strong early transfer business, Lens could struggle to replace several key players, especially in midfield. Although Franck Haise has become Ligue 1's wiliest coach, a third consecutive seventh-place finish will likely be beyond him with better-resourced clubs resurgent.

LILLE
Manager: Paulo Fonseca
Key Arrivals: Bayo (Clermont), Ribeiro (Chaves), Cabella (Montpellier), Martin (Rennes), Zedadka (Clermont)
Key Departures: Botman (Newcastle), Celik (Roma), Bradaric (Salernitana), Yilmaz (Fortuna Sittard)
Prediction: Paulo Fonseca's arrival should bring the overhaul that, in hindsight, should have come with Christophe Galtier's departure for Nice after the 2021 title win. Financial concerns, however, mean a longer-term project is needed and a European return is likely the limit of ambitions.

LORIENT
Manager: Regis Le Bris
Key Arrivals: Mvogo (RB Leipzig), Kalulu (Ajaccio)
Key Departures: Mendes (Almeria)
Prediction: Despite a 15-game winless run, sacking the reliable Christophe Pelissier for rookie coach Regis Le Bris is a major gamble. Much will depend on shrewd transfer business but few teams will be as concerned about the drop.

LYON
Manager: Peter Bosz
Key Arrivals: Lacazette (Arsenal), Tolisso (Bayern Munich), Tete (Shakhtar Donetsk), Lepenant (Caen)
Key Departures: Denayer (released), Dubois (Galatasaray)
Prediction: No European distractions and the returns of Alexandre Lacazette and Corentin Tolisso could be a powerful combination, but Peter Bosz is already on borrowed time and major structural issues will have to be overcome if OL are to challenge for second.

MARSEILLE
Manager: Igor Tudor
Key Arrivals: Guendouzi (Arsenal), Milik (Napoli), Lopez (Roma), Under (Roma), Toure (Le Havre), Mbemba (Porto), Gigot (Spartak Moscow), Clauss (Lens)
Key Departures: Kamara (Aston Villa), Mandanda (Rennes)
Prediction: Quitting was hasty but Jorge Sampaoli's fears of being outgunned in Europe weren't unfounded. With the incoming Igor Tudor untested in the Champions League and France, key players leaving and domestic rivals gathering momentum, Marseille could soon be swamped.

MONACO
Manager: Philippe Clement
Key Arrivals: Minamino (Liverpool), Embolo (Borussia Monchengladbach)
Key Departures: Tchouameni (Real Madrid), Pavlovic (Salzburg), Pellegri (Torino), Aholou (Strasbourg), Fabregas (released), Sidibe (released)
Prediction: After a slow start, Philippe Clement found balance after replacing Niko Kovac to win nine consecutive games during the run-in. Replacing Aurelien Tchouameni will be tough and much will depend on Champions League qualifiers but few boast Monaco's talent in chasing PSG.

MONTPELLIER
Manager: Olivier Dall'Oglio
Key Arrivals: Khazri (Saint-Etienne), Nordin (Saint-Etienne), Maouassa (Club Brugge)
Key Departures: Mollet (Schalke), Ristic (Benfica), Cabella (Lille)
Prediction: Despite disastrous post-Christmas form and the off-season loss of some key players, Montpellier remained European hopefuls for much of last season. A group of smart additions and talismanic captain Teji Savanier staying put should equal a more sustained challenge.

NANTES
Manager: Antoine Kombouare
Key Arrivals: Sissoko (Watford)
Key Departures: Augustin (Basel), Kolo Muani (Eintracht Frankfurt)
Prediction: Few succeeded like veteran coach Antoine Kombouare with so little last year but, having won the cup, this season is a trap. With key players sought after and inexperienced French teams often struggling with the European schedule, four relegation spots will be a big concern.

NICE
Manager: Lucien Favre
Key Arrivals: Ilie (Rapid Bucharest), Bulka (PSG)
Key Departures: Pelmard (Basel), Benitez (PSV)
Prediction: Having led the club in a 2017 title tilt before leaving for Dortmund, Lucien Favre returns to a more ambitious project with a much-improved squad and greater resources. After a cagey season under Christophe Galtier, a talented group will be aiming for the podium at least.

PARIS SAINT-GERMAIN
Manager: Christophe Galtier
Key Arrivals: Mendes (Sporting), Vitinha (Porto), Ekitike (Reims)
Key Departures: Areola (West Ham), Bulka (Nice), Di Maria (Juventus), Simons (PSV), Dagba (Strasbourg)
Prediction: Luis Campos, installed as ideological spearhead, and his pick for coach, Christophe Galtier, both have much to prove in unfamiliar settings. Given their quality, PSG are unlikely to relinquish their title but Galtier, who can lean toward caution, may be out of his depth in Europe.

REIMS
Manager: Oscar Garcia
Key Arrivals: Agbadou (Eupen), Busi (Parma)
Key Departures: Ekitike (PSG), Konan (Al Nassr), Doumbia (Sochaux)
Prediction: Gambling on academy graduates paid off for Reims, finishing 12th, having looked to be one of the division's weakest sides last season. Oscar Garcia nurtured an exciting group, sprinkled with experience who, now a year wiser, will be just as tricky to beat in mid-table.

RENNES
Manager: Bruno Genesio
Key Arrivals: Mandanda (Marseille)
Key Departures: Aguerd (West Ham), Martin (Lille)
Prediction: Having lost Moroccan centre-back Nayef Aguerd to West Ham, Bruno Genesio will fear his free-wheeling team could be picked apart late in the window. However, if they survive intact and sporting director Florian Maurice continues to unearth talent, Rennes will remain podium contenders.

STRASBOURG
Manager: Julien Stephan
Key Arrivals: Aholou (Monaco), Delaine (Metz), Perrin (Marseille), Dagba (PSG)
Key Departures: Caci (Mainz)
Prediction: Much will depend on if Strasbourg reach September without major market losses. If so, with their spine intact, no European football and impressive young coach Julien Stephan continuing, a second top-six finish in a row is a realistic goal, despite the improvement of bigger clubs.

TOULOUSE
Manager: Philippe Montanier
Key Arrivals: Dallinga (Excelsior), Aboukhlal (AZ), Haug (Valerenga)
Key Departures: Sanna (Laval)
Prediction: Toulouse eased to the Ligue 2 title despite having a weaker squad than that which finished third the year before. With four sides being relegated, they'll need to keep their stars and invest defensively, but multiple major goal threats equals a better survival chance than most.

TROYES
Manager: Bruno Irles
Key Arrivals: Savio (Atletico Mineiro), Porozo (Boavista)
Key Departures: Biancone (Nottingham Forest)
Prediction: The City Football Group's vast resources will again provide ESTAC with a big advantage over an even bottom half. Having survived despite surprisingly replacing the well-regarded Laurent Batlles with Ligue 2 stalwart Bruno Irles mid-season, they should, quietly, repeat the feat.

Bundesliga in need of shake-up

German top flight is losing its appeal, with no end in sight of Bayern dominance

As the Bundesliga embarks on its 60th edition, no one, it seems, is particularly keen to break out the bunting and the champagne.

Although not exactly in an existential crisis, the German top flight most definitely has lost a degree of lustre of late. The big picture, once a valuable old master, now is in need of some restoration.

Is it any wonder that the merchants of gloom are in the ascendency? After ten years of total Bayern Munich dominance – and no sign of the Bavarians loosening their grip on Bundesliga power – competition at the top of the table has essentially dried up. Marquee players are either voting with their feet and heading off, or hell-bent on doing so, with ace striker Erling Haaland quitting Borussia Dortmund for Manchester City and Bayern goal king Robert Lewandowski calling time on his eight-year stint at the Allianz Arena by joining Barcelona.

The Bundesliga has also regressed in terms of individual production. One only has to look at the excellent biannual

PLAYERS TO WATCH

ROBERT ANDRICH
(Bayer Leverkusen)
Leverkusen certainly picked up a bargain when they captured this excellent defensive midfielder from Union Berlin for just €6.5m last year. The 27-year-old is aggressive and strong when in possesion.

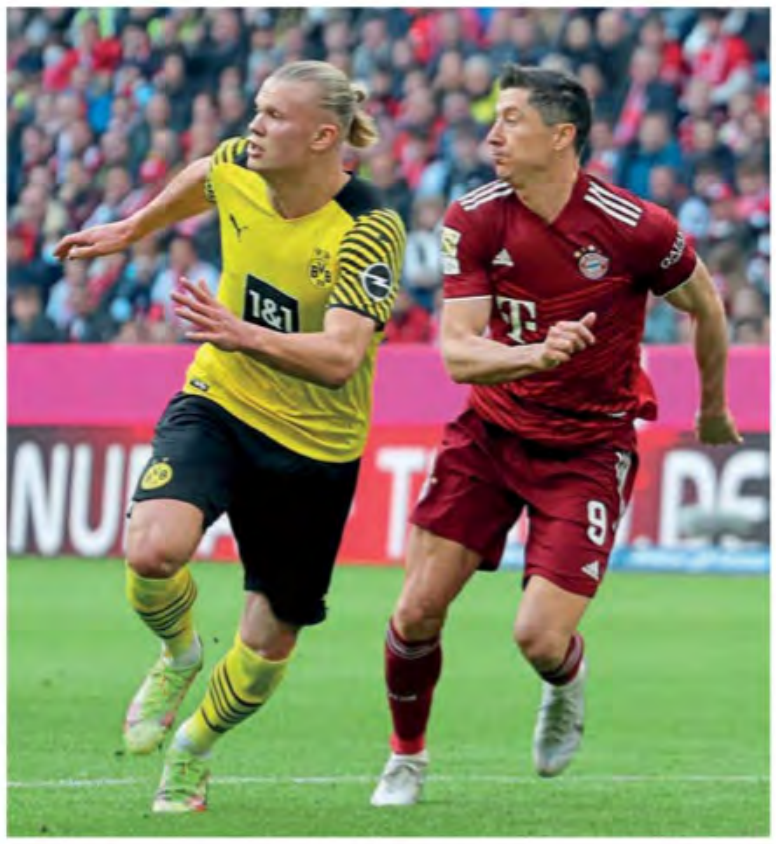
SHERALDO BECKER
(Union Berlin)
Last season, the lively 27-year-old Amsterdam-born striker or attacking midfielder posed innumerable problems to opposing defences with his rapid pace and directness. Determined and self-confident.

RYAN GRAVENBERCH
(Bayern Munich)
After months of pursuit, the German champions finally got their man, signing the brilliant young Dutch midfielder in a deal worth €24m including bonuses. Tall, graceful and skilful in possession with an impressive passing range.

KO ITAKURA
(Borussia Monchengladbach)
Classy Japanese centre-back or anchorman who, after shining on loan in 2021-22 at second-division champions Schalke, signed a permanent deal with Gladbach. Formerly of Manchester City.

MAXIM LEITSCH
(Mainz)
This highly-rated 24-year-old centre-back showed much promise when holding the fort for Bochum against Bayern and RB Leipzig last term. Mainz took advantage of a release clause to recently sign him.

New recruits... Bayern boss Julian Nagelsmann with Ryan Gravenberch, Noussair Mazraoui and Sadio Mane



Departing stars... Erling Haaland and Robert Lewandowski

After ten years of total Bayern Munich dominance – and no sign of the Bavarians loosening their grip on Bundesliga power – competition at the top of the table has essentially dried up

player ratings meticulously compiled by *Kicker* magazine, who in their May survey could not find a single pro worthy of the "World Class" tag, the worst report card in three years.

This reduction in player brownie points largely stems from the way Bayern lost their way in the second half of last season. Cushioned by the absence of genuine challengers, Bayern became more than a little sloppy and coach Julian Nagelsmann will be demanding much more focus and intensity in his sophomore season in charge.

SALIH OZCAN
(Borussia Dortmund)
As a result of great work at Cologne last season, this gritty yet adroit midfielder was recently snapped up by Dortmund for €5m. A former Germany youth international, from the U15s through to the U21s, he now represents Turkey.

MANUEL RIEMANN
(Bochum)
Colourful and charismatic goalkeeper, who played a huge part in keeping his team out of the relegation swamp last campaign, eventually finishing a creditable 13th. Appears to be etering his prime at 33 years of age.

ROLAND SALLAI
(Freiburg)
An irreplaceable figure for Hungary and equally valuable for his club side, who finished in the Europa League places last term. The 25-year-old Magyar right-winger offers speed, creativity and goal-threat in equal measures.

SIMON TERODDE
(Schalke)
The towering striker, 34, has proven himself a prolific second-division marksman and was up to his old tricks again last season, netting 30 goals in as many games. Will be vital for Schalke to avoid an immediate return.

JONAS WIND
(Wolfsburg)
The Denmark striker immediately looked the part on joining Wolfsburg from FC Copenhagen early this year. Tall, skilful, sharp in the box and extremely intelligent moving between the lines.

Popular appointment ...new Dortmund coach Edin Terzic

That said, Bayern do appear to have bought well this summer, bringing in a couple of excellent Ajax youngsters (right-back Noussair Mazraoui and midfielder Ryan Gravenberch) as well as Dutch defender Matthijs de Ligt from Juventus and Senegalese superstar Sadio Mane, who was lured away from Liverpool for €42 million including add-ons.

Mane, still a sprightly 30, will have no trouble fitting in culturally and linguistically in Munich. He used to play down the road in Salzburg, loves the way of life in these parts and speaks good German. Bayern do not see him as a like-for-like replacement for the departed Lewandowski; they intend to deploy the West African as an offensive all-rounder, mainly to be used on the wing but also operating from time to time through the middle as a false nine.

Now Lewandowski has left for pastures new, coach Nagelsmann is very likely to adopt a flexible attacking formula, one without a fixed centre-forward. A mix-and-match set-up in which Mane, Kingsley Coman, Thomas Muller, Leroy Sane and Serge Gnabry constantly interchange to cause confusion.

What the Bundesliga desperately needs is for Dortmund, the other major planet in the German football solar system, to shake off the inconsistency and carelessness of recent years. To give Bayern the sort of fright they have not experienced since Jurgen Klopp masterminded back-to-back shields for the Black-and-Yellows in 2010-11 and 2011-12.

With Haaland gone, it would take some sea-change for Dortmund to improve on last term's Bundesliga silver. But there is a degree of optimism around the club, much of it stemming from an impressive list of new faces including ex-Salzburg *wunderkind* forward Karim Adeyemi, Germany stopper Niklas Sule, Freiburg young gun defender Nico Schlotterbeck and Sebastien Haller, the Ivorian striker who hit 11 goals for Ajax in the Champions League last season.

Too often in the last few years, Dortmund's market efforts have centred on the acquisition of squad signings, players to rotate in and out of the side. This time around, under new director of sport Sebastian Kehl, the plan is to stock up on starters who can make a real difference.

After coach Marco Rose was shown the Westfalenstadion door in May, the Dortmunder board moved promptly to fill the technical area gap with long-time club insider Edin Terzic, who has served the club in all manner of different capacities: scout, youth team coach, technical director and caretaker first-team boss.

The appointment of Terzic, 39, met with almost universal approval in the Dortmund nation. In the second half of the 2020-21 season, he was a highly popular temporary coach, taking over from the sacked Lucien Favre, successfully righting the ship and eventually bequeathing a sizeable legacy (a German Cup triumph and Champions League qualification). Supporters could not get enough of Terzic's energy and passion on the touchline. Players loved his powers of motivation and unity vibe.

Just one all-important question. Does Terzic have the tactical acumen at the highest level? We will soon find out.

Nick Bidwell

With Haaland gone, it would take some sea-change for Dortmund to improve on last term's Bundesliga silver. But there is a degree of optimism around the club

PROMOTED TEAMS

SCHALKE

When Mike Buskens took over as the Gelsenkirchen club's caretaker coach in March – replacing the sacked Dimitrios Grammozis – the Royal Blues were six points adrift of a direct promotion spot. Then the fairy-tale run-in, Schalke winning seven of their last eight fixtures to clinch the second-division title, their ticket back to the top flight at the first time of asking. Buskens has since gone back to his old job of assistant-boss, with ex-Arminia Bielefeld trainer Frank Kramer coming in.

WERDER BREMEN

Following relegation from the elite in 2020-21, Werder took their time adapting to the second-tier school of hard knocks and, at Christmas, were only ninth in the standings. Thankfully for coach Ole Werner and his merry men, the Green-and-Whites recovered with a vengeance in the New Year, especially dominant in six-point encounters and deservedly securing the runners-up spot.

Dortmund signing ...Karim Adeyemi

Team by team

GERMANY

AUGSBURG
Manager: Enrico Maassen
Key Arrivals: Bauer (Greuther Furth), Maier (Hertha Berlin), Demirovic (Freiburg)
Key Departures: Gregoritsch (Freiburg), Moravek (released), Finnbogason (released)
Prediction: On the evidence of an inconsistent past 12 months, FCA are relegation candidates. New coach Maassen, who used to manage Dortmund's reserves, has a reputation for nurturing youth but will have his work cut out here.

BAYER LEVERKUSEN
Manager: Gerardo Seoane
Key Arrivals: Hlozek (Sparta Prague)
Key Departures: Alario (Eintracht Frankfurt), Fofana (Nuremberg)
Prediction: With one of the best attacking tridents in the country – Patrik Schick, Moussa Diaby and Florian Wirtz – Leverkusen have every chance of another top-four finish. Wirtz, currently recovering from a cruciate ligament injury, should be back in September.

BAYERN MUNICH
Manager: Julian Nagelsmann
Key Arrivals: Mane (Liverpool), Gravenberch (Ajax), Mazraoui (Ajax), De Ligt (Juventus)
Key Departures: Lewandowski (Barcelona), Roca (Leeds United) Sule (Borussia Dortmund), Tolisso (Lyon), Richards (Nottingham Forest)
Prediction: Only an extraordinary turn of events – a prolonged outbreak of complacency or the distraction of a mid-season World Cup – will prevent Bayern racking up an 11th straight league title. The arrival of Mane is a clear signal that the Bavarians remain a European powerhouse.

BOCHUM
Manager: Thomas Reis
Key Arrivals: Ordets (Dynamo Moscow), Forster (Stuttgart), Hofmann (Karlsruhe), Janko (Real Valladolid), Osei-Tutu (Arsenal), Stoger (Mainz)
Key Departures: Bella-Kotchap (Southampton), Leitsch (Mainz), Polter (Schalke), Pantovic (Union Berlin)
Prediction: After the newly-promoted Ruhr club's successful survival mission last season, chief financial officer Ilja Kaenzig described it as a "miracle". A similar marvel will be so much more difficult following the sale of centre-backs Bella-Kotchap and Leitsch.

BORUSSIA DORTMUND
Manager: Edin Terzic
Key Arrivals: Schlotterbeck (Freiburg), Adeyemi (Salzburg), Ozcan (Cologne), Sule (Bayern Munich), Haller (Ajax)
Key Departures: Burki (St Louis City), Hitz (Basel), Haaland (Manchester City), Witsel (Atletico Madrid)
Prediction: Despite the sale of talismanic striker Haaland, there is every chance that Dortmund remain Bayern's closest challenger. In his first full season, Terzic has three items at the top of his wish list: a more efficient pressing game, more solid defence, and far fewer injuries than last term.

BORUSSIA MONCHENGLADBACH
Manager: Daniel Farke
Key Arrivals: Fraulo (Midtjylland), Itakura (Manchester City)
Key Departures: Embolo (Monaco), Ginter (Freiburg), Benes (Hamburg)
Prediction: The Foals undoubtedly have the players to improve on last season's tenth place. Appointing Farke this summer is not without its risks: his two stints in the Premier League with Norwich City both ended in failure.

COLOGNE
Manager: Steffen Baumgart
Key Arrivals: Kilian (Mainz), Adamyan (Hoffenheim), Tigges (Borussia Dortmund), Martel (RB Leipzig), Pedersen (Birmingham)
Key Departures: Ozcan (Borussia Dortmund), Schaub (Hannover)
Prediction: No team over-achieved like Cologne last season, achieving a fine seventh-place finish. Baumgart is an outstanding coach, a master motivator and an attacking risk-taker, but even he might find it hard to replicate the feats of 2021-22.

EINTRACHT FRANKFURT
Manager: Oliver Glasner
Key Arrivals: Hauge (Milan), Alario (Bayer Leverkusen), Gotze (PSV), Jakic (Dinamo Zagreb), Kolo Muani (Nantes), Buta (Antwerp), Onguene (Salzburg), Smolcic (Rijeka)
Key Departures: Ilsanker (Genoa), Zuber (AEK Athens), Hinteregger (retired), Kohr (Mainz), Durm (Kaiserslautern), Da Costa (Mainz)
Prediction: Coach Glasner has to find a solution to the mysterious contrast between Eintracht's European and league form. Much will depend on whether they can hang on to Juventus target Filip Kostic.

FREIBURG
Manager: Christian Streich
Key Arrivals: Kyereh (St Pauli), Ginter (Gladbach), Gregoritsch (Augsburg), Doan (PSV)
Key Departures: Itter (Greuther Furth), Schlotterbeck (Borussia Dortmund), Haberer (Union Berlin), Demirovic (Augsburg)
Prediction: Fresh from the most successful campaign in their history – sixth in the league and reaching the cup final – Freiburg will be full of confidence. The return of Germany defender Matthias Ginter should make up for the sale of Nico Schlotterbeck to Dortmund.

HERTHA BERLIN
Manager: Sandro Schwarz
Key Arrivals: Sunjic (Birmingham), Ejuke (CSKA Moscow), Ernst (Bochum), Kenny (Everton), Uremovic (Rubin Kazan)
Key Departures: Maier (Augsburg), Dilrosun (Feyenoord), Kade (Basel), Lotka (Borussia Dortmund), Stark (Werder Bremen)
Prediction: Hertha have been a long-running soap opera for quite some time, with financial mismanagement, poor personnel choices and fans in revolt. After narrowly seeing off Hamburg in a relegation/promotion play-off, the pressure is on new head coach Sandro Schwarz.

HOFFENHEIM
Manager: Andre Breitenreiter
Key Arrivals: Becker (St Pauli), Promel (Union Berlin)
Key Departures: Adamyan (Cologne), Klaus (St Louis City), Gacinovic (AEK Athens)
Prediction: Hoffenheim ended last season with a nine-game winless streak, and this sort of slump can be a hard habit to break. New coach Breitenreiter, brought in to replace Sebastian Hoeness, desperately needs to address a decidedly porous defence, the fifth-worst in the division.

MAINZ
Manager: Bo Svensson
Key Arrivals: Fulgini (Angers), Da Costa (Eintracht Frankfurt), Leitsch (Bochum), Burgzorg (Heracles Almelo), Ingvartsen (Union Berlin), Kohr (Eintracht Frankfurt), Barkok (Eintracht Frankfurt), Caci (Strasbourg)
Key Departures: St Juste (Sporting), Niakhate (Nottingham Forest), Stoger (Bochum)
Prediction: A team worth much more than the sum of it parts, Mainz will be looking to benefit from the momentum of an excellent eighth-place finish last term. One area they must improve on is their away form – 35 of their 48 points were earned at home last term.

RB LEIPZIG
Manager: Domenico Tedesco
Key Arrivals: Blaswich (Heracles Almelo), Schlager (Wolfsburg)
Key Departures: Martel (Cologne), Martinez (Genoa), Adams (Leeds United), Mvogo (Lorient)
Prediction: While Tedesco insists that it's too much to talk of RB as title contenders, a top-four finish must be within the scope of his young team. Brought in mid-way through last season, Tedesco spectacularly turned things around, constantly winning in the Bundesliga and claiming the cup. Holding on to coveted attacker Christopher Nkunku is key.

SCHALKE
Manager: Frank Kramer
Key Arrivals: Cisse (Gent), Greiml (Rapid Vienna), Mohr (Heidenheim), Mollet (Montpellier), Yoshida (Sampdoria), Zalazar (Eintracht Frankfurt), Ouwejan (AZ), Polter (Bochum), Kral (Spartak Moscow), Brunner (Arminia Bielefeld)
Key Departures: Matondo (Rangers)
Prediction: Now that Schalke, one of the biggest clubs in Germany, are back in the top flight, new coach Kramer is doing his best to keep a lid on expectations. For him, survival has to be the one and only goal in 2022-23 and he will know all about the Gelsenkirchner's history of instability: 17 different head coaches in the last two decades.

STUTTGART
Manager: Pelegrino Matarazzo
Key Arrivals: Mavropanos (Arsenal), Vagnoman (Hamburg), Ito (Jubilo Iwata)
Key Departures: Forster (Bochum), Maffeo (Mallorca)
Prediction: The smart money says Stuttgart are in for another difficult season. Especially worrying is the mountain of speculation surrounding talented Austrian striker Sasa Kalajdzic. A glimmer of hope comes in the form of centre-backs Hiroki Ito and Konstantinos Mavropanos, both of whom signed permanently after successful loan spells.

UNION BERLIN
Manager: Urs Fischer
Key Arrivals: Leweling (Greuther Furth), Siebatcheu (Young Boys), Grill (Bayer Leverkusen), Leite (Porto), Pantovic (Bochum)
Key Departures: Awoniyi (Nottingham Forest)
Prediction: Despite qualifying for their first-ever Europa League campaign last season, Union remain low key in their objectives for 2022-23. "The most important thing is to gain enough points to avoid relegation," says Union president Dirk Zingler. The loss of top goalscorer Taiwo Awoniyi represents a body blow.

WERDER BREMEN
Manager: Ole Werner
Key Arrivals: Pieper (Arminia Bielefeld), Stage (Copenhagen), Stark (Hertha Berlin), Buchanan (Derby County), Burke (Sheffield United)
Key Departures: Beste (Heidenheim), Nawrocki (Legia Warsaw), Toprak (Antalyaspor)
Prediction: Werder supporters will be praying that their prolific strike partnership of Marvin Ducksch and Niclas Fullkrug maintain their high standards of last season. The front-line duo contributed 39 goals to the club's promotion push last term.

WOLFSBURG
Manager: Niko Kovac
Key Arrivals: Svanberg (Bologna), Franjic (Dinamo Zagreb), Kaminski (Lech Poznan), Wimmer (Arminia Bielefeld), Fischer (Nuremburg)
Key Departures: Schlager (RB Leipzig), John Brooks (released)
Prediction: In the wake of a disastrous season in which they flopped in both the Bundesliga and Champions League, new coach Kovac is expected to immediately restore competitiveness. Even if a top-four berth appears distinctly unlikely, Wolfsburg should play with far more spirit and discipline under Kovac.

All to play for in Serie A

No obvious favourites for 2022-23 *Scudetto* as leading sides continue to evolve

PLAYERS TO WATCH

STEFANO SENSI
(Monza)
The 27-year-old midfielder may get a great chance to re-float a once highly-promising career with his season-long loan move to Silvio Berlusconi's newly-promoted Monza from Inter. Much will be expected of him.

AGUSTIN ALVAREZ
(Sassuolo)
Plucked from Uruguayan giants Penarol after scoring 34 goals since his debut two years ago, including ten while winning the Golden Boot in the 2021 Copa Sudamericana. Exciting striker and still only 21 years of age.

SAMUELE RICCI
(Torino)
A late substitute in a 1-1 Nations League draw with Germany in early June, 21-year-old Torino attacking midfielder Ricci looks like a player with a great future. Already a recruit to Roberto Mancini's New Italy, Mark 2.

DAVIDE FRATTESI
(Sassuolo)
Another talent from the Sassuolo school who has already been capped for Italy, also in that 1-1 June draw with Germany, 23-year-old Frattesi is another dynamic midfielder, seemingly headed for New Italy.

FEDERICO GATTI
(Juventus)
Bought from Serie B side Frosinone last January by Juventus for €7.5 million, 24-year-old defender Gatti made an impressive debut for Italy in a 0-0 Nations League draw with England in June. This could be his breakthrough season.

Premier League "hand-me-down" ...Romelu Lukaku is back at Inter

A difficult winter is coming for Italian football fans. At the end of a year that saw the national team on a helter-skelter ride from triumph at Euro 2020 to non-qualification for the Qatar World Cup, Italy will, for the second consecutive time, miss out on the greatest football show on Earth.

How will this impact on the new Serie A season, due to begin with Sampdoria v Atalanta on Saturday August 13? In a time of worldwide economic recession, the World Cup debacle merely adds another demoralising element.

One intriguing item in the 2022-23 season, however, sees the return to Serie A of media magnate Silvio Berlusconi and his ever-faithful right-hand man Adriano Galliani, with their newly-promoted Monza team. Together the pair plotted the huge success of the Milan side starring Dutch legends Gullit, Van Basten and Rijkaard, building the club into arguably the strongest team in world football at that time.

Could lightning strike a second time at Monza? Hardly. Galliani points out that Monza, his home club and one he has supported all his life, will be focused exclusively on staying up in Serie A, saying: "What I keep saying to all my people is: look, it took Monza 110 years to win promotion to Serie A, so I really don't want to take just a year to go back down again to Serie B."

> Italian football is the poor relative, primarily of the English Premier League, unable to attract the Platinis, Maradonas or Zicos of modern football, as it once did

All is changed, of course, since the Milan glory days. Italian football is the poor relative, primarily of the English Premier League, unable to attract the Platinis, Maradonas or Zicos of modern football, as it once did. A look at this summer's transfer market activity in Italy makes the point.

Monza masterminds... Silvio Berlusconi and Adriano Galliani in the Monza stands

More and more, Italy is the first refuge for big-name players who have gone past their sell-by date in England or elsewhere. In recent seasons, ageing or not so ageing stars such as Zlatan Ibrahimovic, Olivier Giroud, Franck Ribery, Suso, Luis Alberto, Chris Smalling and Juan Cuadrado are just some of those who have prolonged or boosted their careers in Italy.

This year, the Premier League "hand-me-downs" include big names such as Paul Pogba, Romelu Lukaku and his Belgian compatriot Divock Origi, who headed respectively for Juventus, Internazionale and title holders Milan. No surprise, either, that these three

LUKA JOVIC
(Fiorentina)
A €60m move to the Bernabeu in 2019 did not work out, delivering just three goals in 51 games. Fiorentina will hope that he can reproduce the form that caught Real Madrid's eye with 27 goals for Eintracht Frankfurt.

MATTEO CANCELLIERI
(Lazio)
Another 20-year-old on Roberto Mancini's radar, Lazio forward Cancellieri made his Italy debut in that 1-1 Nations League draw with Germany in June. Sparkled for Verona in his first Serie A season last year to earn a big move.

GIORGIO SCALVINI
(Atalanta)
18-year-old defender Scalvini had the misfortune of making his international debut in Italy's 5-2 drubbing by Germany. That result notwithstanding, he showed enough in 18 outings last season to mark him out as a player with a big future.

PAULO DYBALA
(Roma)
One of the summer's most intriguing transfers, it will be interesting to see how Dybala fits into Jose Mourinho's team. The Argentine had been linked with Inter after leaving Juve, before opting for a switch to the capital.

MATTIA ZACCAGNI
(Lazio)
The 27-year-old attacking midfielder experienced a breakthrough season last year, joining one of Italy's biggest clubs, namely Lazio, whilst also winning his first cap for Italy in a 3-2 win over Turkey. More is expected from him.

Back in Turin...Paul Pogba greets the Juventus fans

are expected to dominate this year's title contest while, along with Napoli, they will lead the Italian charge in the Champions League.

In that European context, too, Italy will hope to do better than last season when only the Jose Mourinho-coached Roma, winners of the inaugural Europa Conference League, distinguished themselves after a complete Italian whitewash in the Champions and Europa League.

Last year's surprise Serie A champions, Milan have retained many of the key elements in their 2021-22 triumph – namely coach Stefano Pioli, technical director Paolo Maldini and, thus far at least, players such as Portuguese winger Rafael Leao, midfielder Sandro Tonali, left-back Theo Hernandez, goalkeeper Mike Maignan and 35-year-old Giroud, to name but a few. Mind you, it will be a miracle if all of these (Giroud excluded) are still with Milan when the season actually starts. As for the currently recuperating Ibrahimovic (who turns 41 in October), he has just signed a new one-year contract extension and hopes to make a comeback in January.

As of now, it is hard to assess the full impact of the sale of Milan for €1.2 billion from one US investment firm, Elliott, to another, RedBird. In four years' management of the club, Elliott did brilliantly to restore Milan to their former lofty standing both in Italian and European soccer.

Inter, regarded by many the strongest side last season despite finishing second to their city cousins, look even stronger this year. Not only have they re-signed Lukaku (on a £6.9 million loan plus bonuses) but also Roma and ex-Arsenal man Henrikh Mkhitaryan.

"Old Lady" Juventus also look stronger with the arrivals of Argentine Angel Di Maria (from PSG) and Frenchman Paul Pogba (from Manchester United) compensating for the loss of talented Argentine Paulo Dybala, who has joined Roma on a free transfer. After a poor season last year (by their standards), Juventus will, in all likelihood, be harder than ever to beat under the coaching of the experienced Massimiliano Allegri.

Intriguingly, too, both Juve and Inter line out with genuine firepower up front. Inter have the already tried and tested strikeforce of Argentine ace Lautaro Martinez in partnership with Lukaku, while Juve could field a front three of Di Maria, Serbian ace Dusan Vlahovic and Federico Chiesa, back from a knee injury.

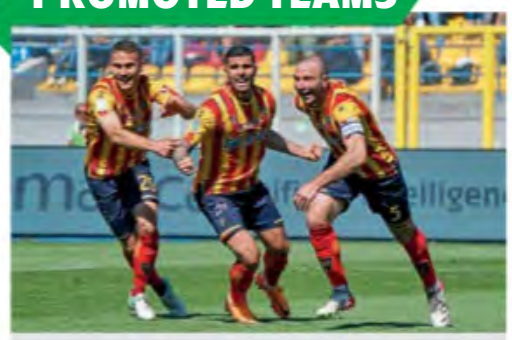
Both these clubs, however, can expect to lose important players in defence with Inter duo Milan Skriniar and Stefan de Vrij attracting much foreign attention. Juve, for their part, have already lost iconic Italian defender Giorgio Chiellini who, at the age of 37 and after 17 years with Juventus, has moved on to LAFC for a last hurrah on a fantastic career. Joining him through the exit door is Dutch defender Matthijs de Ligt, who has joined Bayern Munich. However the addition of Bremer from Torino will more than make up for those departures.

A final thought is that, in the context of a relatively static marketplace where wage cuts, or at least static salaries, are the order of the day, sides like Napoli, Atalanta, Roma, Lazio and Fiorentina remain solid units that will be giving little away. Serie A may not have the cash it once had, but it will still be very competitive.

Paddy Agnew

> In four years' management of the club, Elliott did brilliantly to restore Milan to their former lofty standing both in Italian and European soccer

PROMOTED TEAMS



LECCE
Back in Serie A for the 17th time in the last 37 years, the southern club Lecce has a deep knowledge of how to battle and survive in the top flight and that, of course, will be the name of the game for last season's Serie B champions. In contrast, coach Marco Baroni has been spectacularly unsuccessful in three, brief attempts at Serie A with Siena, Benevento and Frosinone.

CREMONESE
Back in Serie A after a 26-year absence, Lombardy club Cremonese risk immediate relegation. Coach Massimiliano Alvini, with a long history in amateur football, will need all the help he can get in his first season in the top flight. Club director Ariedo Braida, a key figure in the Milan success story of the '80s and '90s, could prove useful.

MONZA
You could make a case for Monza staying up. Firstly, coach Giovanni Stroppa can call on experienced players such as midfielders Matteo Pessina and Stefano Sensi as well as goalkeeper Alessio Cragno and defender Andrea Ranocchia. Secondly as director Adriano Galliani – formerly of Milan – keeps on saying, the club has waited 110 years for this and they are not going to go and blow it immediately.

Holders...Milan players celebrate after winning last season's Serie A

Team by team

ITALY

ATALANTA
Manager: Gian Piero Gasperini
Key Arrivals: Demiral (Juventus), Ederson (Salernitana)
Key Departures: Pessina (Monza), Sutalo (Dinamo Zagreb), Del Prato (Parma), Gollini (Fiorentina), Reca (Spezia), Lovato (Salernitana)
Prediction: After three intoxicating seasons in the Champions League, even reaching the quarter-finals in 2019-20, Atalanta return to normality this year, not having qualified for any European competition. Time for Gasperini to regroup and rebuild.

BOLOGNA
Manager: Sinisa Mihajlovic
Key Arrivals: Lykogiannis (Cagliari), Aebischer (Young Boys), Ferguson (Aberdeen), Cambiaso (Juventus)
Key Departures: Hickey (Brentford), Svanberg (Wolfsburg)
Prediction: Having finished 16 points clear of the relegation zone last season, Bologna might be a little more ambitious than that 13th-place finish. Transfer activity has been rather modest so far, though.

CREMONESE
Manager: Massimiliano Alvini
Key Arrivals: Tsadjout (Milan), Ghiglione (Genoa), Radu (Inter), Vasquez (Genoa), Sernicola (Sassuolo), Chiriches (Sassuolo), Milanese (Roma)
Key Departures: Zannimachia (Juventus), Okoli (Atalanta, end of loan), Fagioli (Juventus, end of loan)
Prediction: Former Perugia coach Alvini gets his first taste of Serie A with newly-promoted Cremonese, and he will have his work cut out. One big issue is where the goals will come from: not one of their players registered double figures in Serie B last season.

EMPOLI
Manager: Paolo Zanetti
Key Arrivals: Destro (Genoa), Perisan (Pordenone), Vicario (Cagliari), Cacace (Sint-Truiden), De Winter (Juventus), Marin (Cagliari), Stojanovic (D. Zagreb), Ebuehi (Benfica), Satriano (Inter)
Key Departures: Ricci (Torino), Asllani (Inter), Romagnoli (Parma)
Prediction: Sacked by the subsequently relegated Venezia last April after eight successive Serie A defeats, coach Zanetti may have fallen on his feet at Empoli, one of last season's liveliest lower-table battlers. Staying up is possible.

FIORENTINA
Manager: Vincenzo Italiano
Key Arrivals: Gollini (Atalanta), Jovic (Real Madrid), Mandragora (Juventus)
Key Departures: Callejon (released)
Prediction: Fiorentina owner, Rocco Commisso, has kept faith with former Spezia coach, Italiano, despite an inconsistent first season in charge and a seventh-placed finish last term. For the first time in six years, Fiorentina are back in Europe in the Europa Conference League.

INTERNAZIONALE
Manager: Simone Inzaghi
Key Arrivals: Lukaku (Chelsea), Onana (Ajax), Mkhitaryan (Roma), Asllani (Empoli), Correa (Lazio), Bellanova (Cagliari)
Key Departures: Perisic (Tottenham), Ranocchia (Monza), Vidal (Flamengo), Esposito (Anderlecht), Sensi (Monza), Vecino (released), Kolarov (retired)
Prediction: For many, Inter are the title favourites. Last year's runners-up often looked the strongest in the land. With the return of Lukaku, they look even stronger and can go one better.

JUVENTUS
Manager: Massimiliano Allegri
Key Arrivals: Di Maria (PSG), Pogba (Manchester United), Bremer (Torino), Gatti (Frosinone)
Key Departures: Chiellini (LAFC), Dybala (Roma), De Ligt (Bayern Munich), Bernardeschi (Toronto FC)
Prediction: There are at least two good reasons (Di Maria and Pogba) to believe that Juve will improve on last season's highly unusual empty-handed finish. They remain the side to beat.

LAZIO
Manager: Maurizio Sarri
Key Arrivals: Maximiano (Granada), Zaccagni (Verona), Casale (Verona), Marcos Antonio (Shakhtar Donetsk), Gila (Real Madrid), Romagnoli (Milan), Cancellieri (Verona)
Key Departures: Correa (Inter), Luiz Felipe (Betis), Strakosha (Brentford), Reina (Villarreal), Leiva (Gremio)
Prediction: Fifth-placed Lazio were worthy Europa League qualifiers last term. New arrivals should complement a battle-hardened squad inspired by striker Ciro Immobile and midfielders Sergej Milinkovic-Savic and Luis Alberto.

LECCE
Manager: Marco Baroni
Key Arrivals: Persson (Roma), Baschirotto (Ascoli), Askildsen (Sampdoria), Colombo (Milan), Frabotta (Juventus), Brancolini (Fiorentina), Ceesay (Zurich)
Key Departures: Coda (Genoa)
Prediction: Serie A survival is the ultimate aim for last season's Serie B champions. Coach Baroni has been here before with Siena, Benevento and Frosinone but with little or no success.

MILAN
Manager: Stefano Pioli
Key Arrivals: Origi (Liverpool), Messias (Crotone), Florenzi (Roma)
Key Departures: Kessie (Barcelona), Hauge (Eintracht Frankfurt), Leo Duarte (Istanbul Basaksehir), Caldara (Spezia), Castillejo (Valencia), Romagnoli (Lazio)
Prediction: Back on top of Italian football for the first time in over a decade, reigning champions Milan will not sell their title lightly. The good news is that the Pioli-Maldini, coach-director pairing remains in charge. The intentions of new owners, US investment firm RedBird, remain to be seen.

MONZA
Manager: Giovanni Stroppa
Key Arrivals: Pessina (Atalanta), Cragno (Cagliari), Carboni (Cagliari), Sensi (Inter), Ranocchia (Inter), Colpani (Atalanta), Bettella (Atalanta), Valoti (SPAL), Antov (CSKA Sofia), Pereira (Benfica), Birindelli (Pisa), Sorrentino (Pescara), Mancuso (Empoli)
Key Departures: Ramirez (released), Brescianini (Milan, end of loan), Favilli (Genoa, end of loan)
Prediction: Much attention will rightly be focused on the return of media magnate, ex-Prime Minister, 85-year-old Silvio Berlusconi to Serie A. Aided by his old companion in arms Adriano Galliani, the former Milan owner will not pass unnoticed.

NAPOLI
Manager: Luciano Spalletti
Key Arrivals: Kvaratskhelia (Dinamo Batumi), Olivera (Getafe), Zambo Anguissa (Fulham), Ostigard (Brighton)
Key Departures: Koulibaly (Chelsea), Insigne (Toronto FC), Ospina (Al Nassr), Mertens (released), Malcuit (released), Ghoulam (released)
Prediction: In the last seven years, Napoli have finished second three times and third twice. In short, they have been knocking on the door. If Koulibaly remains the only big name to leave, that door may yet open.

ROMA
Manager: Jose Mourinho
Key Arrivals: Dybala (Juventus), Matic (Manchester United), Celik (Lille), Svilar (Benfica)
Key Departures: Mkhitaryan (Inter), Lopez (Marseille), Under (Marseille), Reynolds (Westerlo), Florenzi (Milan)
Prediction: Emperor Jose has come, seen and conquered. Admittedly it was only the Europa Conference League but around here no one is complaining. If Mourinho loses his brightest star, namely Nicolo Zaniolo, will the Roma supporters still love him?

SALERNITANA
Manager: Davide Nicola
Key Arrivals: Bradaric (Lille), Bohinen (CSKA Moscow), Mikael (Sport Recife), Coulibaly (Udinese), Lovato (Atalanta), Sambia (Montpellier), Valencia (Catolica), Botheim (Krasnodar), Simy (Parma)
Key Departures: Obi (Reggina), Djuric (Verona), Ederson (Atalanta)
Prediction: Head coach Davide Nicola deserves a special award for Salernitana's Serie A survival last season, given that they were bottom from September to March. Expect another scrap for survival this year.

SAMPDORIA
Manager: Marco Giampaolo
Key Arrivals: Caputo (Sassuolo), Sabiri (Ascoli), Rincon (Torino)
Key Departures: Yoshida (Schalke), Thorsby (Union Berlin), Ekdal (Spezia)
Prediction: Coach Marco Giampaolo managed to guide Samp to 15th after returning to the club in January. With experienced players such as Tomas Rincon and 39-year-old sharpshooter Fabio Quagliarella still around, survival should be easier this year.

SASSUOLO
Manager: Alessio Dionisi
Key Arrivals: Alvarez (Penarol), Henrique (Gremio), Thorstvedt (Genk), Harroui (Sparta Rotterdam), Ceide (Rosenborg), Ciervo (Roma)
Key Departures: Caputo (Sampdoria), Odgaard (AZ), Chiriches (Cremonese)
Prediction: Under the coaching of Alessio Dionisi, one of Italy's brightest young coaches, Sassuolo finished mid-table last season. With talented players such as Domenico Berardi, Giacomo Raspadori, Davide Frattesi and Gianluca Scamasca still on the books, we expect a repeat.

SPEZIA
Manager: Luca Gotti
Key Arrivals: Bourabia (Sassuolo), Reca (Atalanta), Caldara (Milan), Ekdal (Sampdoria), Serpe (Genoa)
Key Departures: Kovalenko (Atalanta, end of loan), Manaj (Barcelona, end of loan),
Prediction: Spezia are aiming to extend their first stay in Serie A to three years. Former Udinese coach, Gotti, who has replaced Italo-Brazilian boss Thiago Motta, has plenty to do and limited resources.

TORINO
Manager: Ivan Juric
Key Arrivals: Ricci (Empoli), Pellegri (Monaco), Radonjic (Marseille)
Key Departures: Rincon (Sampdoria), Belotti (released), Bremer (Juventus)
Prediction: Avoiding the drop should be more than possible after the arrivals of Pietro Pellegri in attack and Samuele Ricci in midfield, but losing Brazilian Bremer, one of Serie A's best central defenders last campaign, to city arch-rivals Juventus is a massive blow.

UDINESE
Manager: Andrea Sottil
Key Arrivals: Beto (Portimonense), Ebosele (Derby County), Buta (Braga), Lovric (Lugano), Bijol (CSKA Moscow)
Key Departures: Stryger Larsen (Trabzonspor), Coulibaly (Salernitana)
Prediction: Udinese's squad may not be sorted until the last moment, given that the club owners, the Pozzo family, can call on a network of talent scouts.

VERONA
Manager: Gabriele Cioffi
Key Arrivals: Simeone (Cagliari), Henry (Venezia), Caprari (Sampdoria), Doig (Hibernian), Montipo (Benevento), Djuric (Salernitana), Piccoli (Atalanta), Hongla (Antwerp)
Key Departures: Cancellieri (Lazio), Casale (Lazio), Zaccagni (Lazio), Udogie (Udinese)
Prediction: Of all Italy's minnows, none did better last season than ninth-placed Verona. Cioffi, the replacement for Igor Tudor, inherits a solid squad that should be capable of a mid-table berth.

Real Madrid favourites to retain league title

Sound investments make Madrid the team to beat

Productive partnership... Benzema and Vinicius Junior

Exactly two weeks after beating Liverpool to the Champions League trophy, *Los Blancos* secured another victory over the Reds: the signing of much-coveted France and Monaco midfielder Aurelien Tchouameni.

Both finalists had sent scouts to watch the 22-year-old over the course of the 2021-22 campaign, alongside the likes of Paris Saint-Germain and the Premier League's Manchester clubs, but the pull of the Champions League and La Liga winners was ultimately too strong.

The capture somewhat softened the blow of missing out on Kylian Mbappe in May, and Real Madrid clearly took joy in clawing back some PR points at Tchouameni's official unveiling, with their new signing openly revealing to the media how he rejected Mbappe's calls to join the French giants. Mbappe 1-1 Real Madrid.

The fact that president Florentino Perez was willing to pay such a large fee – almost €100m including add-ons – for a player with just 12 senior France caps and four Champions League appearances demonstrates an openness to invest in potential over stature. That approach couldn't be further in outlook from his first tenure at the club in the early 2000s, when fees of that size had been reserved for his "*Galacticos*".

These days, players tend to become stars at Madrid, rather than arriving as the full package. Take Brazilian forward Vinicius Junior, who was one of the league's best players and directly involved in 27 league goals last season – more than in the previous three campaigns combined.

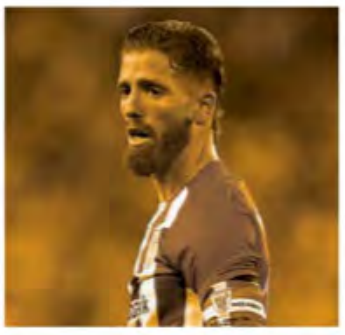
His incredible form and partnership with Karim Benzema – the most productive partnership in La Liga

PLAYERS TO WATCH

UMAR SADIQ
(Almeria)
Nigeria international Sadiq, who scored for his country at this year's AFCON, played a key role in Almeria's promotion after contributing 18 goals and nine assists in 36 matches. This is his first taste of La Liga football.

LUKA MODRIC
(Real Madrid)
The 36-year-old Croatia legend signed a one-year contract extension in June. He still has the quality and energy to control games, as proven with a masterful 90 minutes in the Champions League final win over Liverpool.

DAVID GARCIA
(Osasuna)
According to Osasuna fans, the wrong Garcia (Eric) started for Spain in their Nations League games in June. The uncapped centre-back is extremely strong in the air and keen to impress Luis Enrique.



IKER MUNIAIN
(Athletic Bilbao)
The Athletic captain, and stalwart at the club since 2009, created more chances than any other La Liga player in 2021-22 and registered ten assists for the first time in his career. Can he continue that form this season?

ANSU FATI
(Barcelona)
Injury problems restricted the promising winger to just three La Liga starts in 2021-22. With a full pre-season under his belt, he'll be desperate to make up for lost time and also force his way into Spain's World Cup squad.

in 2021-22 – was a far cry from October 2020, when the France forward was infamously caught on camera telling Ferland Mendy not to pass to a 19-year-old Vini, as he was "playing against" them.

The duo's attacking output will be crucial again to Real Madrid's title chances, with Benzema particularly keen to start the season strongly so as to consolidate his chances of winning the 2022 Ballon d'Or.

Coach Carlo Ancelotti, looking to become the first Real Madrid manager to win back-to-back league titles since Leo Beenhakker in the late 1980s, also has hopes of redemption for Eden Hazard.

The Belgium winger has been a source of frustration for Real fans since joining from Chelsea in 2019, but his manager confirmed that he'll remain at the club "to show his quality"; much to the delight of his former Blues team-mate Antonio Rudiger, who has joined *Los Blancos* on a free transfer to boost their defensive options.

Meanwhile over at title rivals Barcelona, departures were supposed to be the order of the day, but club president Joan Laporta has struggled to flog players who've barely touched turf over recent seasons.

Barcelona's decision – approved by a members' vote – to sell off future merchandising and television rights may

Coach Carlo Ancelotti is looking to become the first Real Madrid manager to win back-to-back league titles since Leo Beenhakker in the late 1980s

Welcome to Spain... Real Madrid new boy Aurelien Tchouameni

YUNUS MUSAH
(Valencia)
The 19-year-old USA international is about to embark on his third season in La Liga. He's shown on-field maturity beyond his years and is expected to attract attention from scouts across Europe this campaign.

YEREMY
(Villarreal)
The Spanish Golden Boy 2022 nominee is one member of an exciting Villarreal attack that also contains Gerard Moreno, Paco Alcacer, Samu Chukwueze, Arnaut Danjuma and Boulaye Dia.

AWER MABIL
(Cadiz)
Born in a Kenyan refugee camp, the 26-year-old striker now holds Australian citizenship after moving in 2006. He signed for Cadiz this summer after scoring the penalty that guaranteed the Socceroos a place at the World Cup.

JOSELU
(Espanyol)
Nicknamed "Joselu Airlines" for his strength in the air, the journeyman striker (formerly of Stoke City and Newcastle United) joins Espanyol on a free transfer after his best-scoring season at relegated Alaves.

FRANCK KESSIE
(Barcelona)
Joins Barcelona after a Serie A-winning season at Milan in which he played 31 times and scored six goals. His dynamism and tenacity should complement a set of technically gifted midfielders at Camp Nou.

have helped alleviate some financial issues, but it still took until July for them to register free transfers Franck Kessie and Andreas Christensen. The marquee signings of Robert Lewandowski and Raphinha, however, showed the club can still attract the game's biggest names.

A full pre-season under Xavi should definitely benefit the team's on-pitch chemistry, which showed signs of promise last season despite their inconsistency.

The Catalan coach has insisted his side will challenge for the title in 2022-23, although it will be a tough task for such a youthful group. Experience tends to go a long way in La Liga, and Real Madrid are not short of the stuff. Overturning last season's 13-point gap to the champions will be a tough ask for Barca.

Third-placed Atletico Madrid surprisingly surrendered their league crown without much of a fight but qualified for the Champions League for a tenth season running. Diego Simeone's days at the Metropolitano Stadium may be coming to an end in the not too distant future, with just two years left on his current contract, and it is difficult to imagine him exiting the *Rojiblancos* quietly.

Last chance saloon? ...Atletico Madrid boss Diego Simeone

Whether he can inspire them to one last hurrah remains to be seen. The defensive foundations that his finest moments have been built on appeared to wilt last season: Atletico conceded more goals than any team in the top eight last term. Meanwhile at the other end, their highest scorer, Angel Correa, only managed 12 goals. The return of the much-maligned Alvaro Morata could therefore be a blessing in disguise as he attempts to play his way into Luis Enrique's World Cup side.

> Diego Simeone's days at the Metropolitano Stadium may be coming to an end in the not too distant future, with just two years left on his current contract

Julen Lopetegui's Sevilla outfit finished fourth last season but were paradoxically the side that came the closest to challenging Real for the title. They lost as many times as the champions but were made to suffer for drawing 16 games – a league high.

No players started more league games for the 2019-20 Europa League winners than centre-back pairing Diego Carlos and Jules Kounde, so the breaking up of that partnership is likely to have a huge impact on Sevilla's title chances in 2022-23.

Looking to break in to La Liga's top four next season are Champions League semi-finalists Villarreal, whose domestic form may have suffered from the demands of such an impressive European run. It's thought coach Unai Emery will prioritise the league, and a potential top-four spot, over the Europa Conference League.

Real Sociedad and Copa del Rey winners Real Betis will also be amongst the top clubs this forthcoming campaign, with legendary club captain Joaquin likely to be playing the final season of his career for the Andalusians.

Finally, there are some notable changes in the dugouts this season as Gennaro Gattuso takes charge of Valencia, despite some supporters rallying against his appointment, while fans' favourite Ernesto Valverde will be embarking on his third spell in charge of Athletic Bilbao.

Jared Tinslay

Building a team... Barca coach Xavi

PROMOTED TEAMS

ALMERIA
Rubi's *Rojiblancos* are back in the Spanish elite for the first time since 2014-15 after finishing as Segunda Division champions thanks to a favourable head-to-head record over Real Valladolid. They reportedly made €15m on Liverpool's signing of striker Darwin Nunez due to a 20 per cent sell-on clause.

REAL VALLADOLID
Real Valladolid are back in La Liga at the first time of asking. Club president and former Real Madrid, Barcelona and Brazil striker Ronaldo completed the Camino de Santiago pilgrimage trail on an e-bike, fulfilling a promise he made after his club won promotion.

GIRONA
The Catalan club, who have won two of their last four La Liga games against Real Madrid, finished the campaign level on points with seventh-placed Real Oviedo, but ensured their place in the play-offs due to their superior head-to-head record. They beat Eibar and Tenerife to book their spot in the top tier.

Team by team

SPAIN

ALMERIA
Manager: Rubi
Key Arrivals: Milovanovic (Partizan Belgrade), Pozo (Sevilla), Guedes (Vitoria Guimaraes), Babic (Red Star Belgrade), Mendes (Lorient), Sola (Barcelona), Kaiky (Santos), Svidersky (Manchester United),
Key Departures: Bunuel (released)
Prediction: The newly-promoted club, backed by Turki Al Sheikh's resources, are on their ninth coach in as many seasons but seem to have found a winner in Rubi. He suffered relegation with Levante in 2015-16 but has nurtured a team spirit that will be hard to crack. They should survive.

ATHLETIC BILBAO
Manager: Ernesto Valverde
Key Arrivals: Guruzeta (Amorebieta)
Key Departures: Ezketia (Racing Santander), Nunez (Celta Vigo)
Prediction: After a two-and-a-half-year sabbatical, during which he published a second photography book, former Barcelona boss Ernesto Valverde returns to the dugout. His task will be to help secure European football for Athletic Club after they fell four points short last season.

ATLETICO MADRID
Manager: Diego Simeone
Key Arrivals: Witsel (Borussia Dortmund), Lino (Gil Vicente)
Key Departures: Herrera (Houston Dynamo), Vrsaljko (Olympiakos), Suarez (released)
Prediction: A depleted squad suffered in 2021-22, with no outfield player starting more than 30 league matches. Simeone will likely refocus on defensive solidity after shipping a surprising numbers of goals last term. Improvements are expected but a title charge is probably beyond them.

BARCELONA
Manager: Xavi
Key Arrivals: Raphinha (Leeds United), Lewandowski (Bayern Munich), Torre (Racing Santander), Christensen (Chelsea), Kessie (Milan)
Key Departures: Coutinho (Aston Villa), Lenglet (Tottenham), Trincao (Sporting), Dani Alves (released)
Prediction: For a second season running, Barcelona failed to hit the 80-point mark in 2021-22, so that will be their main target. Starting the campaign with a settled coaching staff will help, as will the summer additions. The arrival of elite goal grabber Robert Lewandowski should ensure Barca challenge Real Madrid for the title.

CADIZ
Manager: Sergio
Key Arrivals: Mabil (Midtjylland), Alcaraz (Real Valladolid), Chust (Real Madrid), Zaldua (Real Sociedad)
Key Departures: Jonsson (AEK Athens), Salvi (Rayo Vallecano), Haroyan (Anorthosis Famagusta)
Prediction: After narrowly avoiding relegation last season, *Los Piratas* will again be up against it in 2022-23. Coach Sergio took over in January 2022 and oversaw some important victories, including a 1-0 win at Camp Nou in April, but fans should expect a difficult season.

CELTA VIGO
Manager: Eduardo Coudet
Key Arrivals: Swedberg (Hammarby), De la Torre (Heracles Almelo), Nunez (Athletic Bilbao), Rodriguez (Sevilla)
Key Departures: Araujo (America), Mendez (Real Sociedad), Pineda (AEK Athens), Yokuslu (West Bromwich Albion)
Prediction: Celta had a decent 2021-22 campaign, despite a small drop in their final standing from the previous season. They've now got a settled formation and style under Coudet, which should help maintain their top-half status, but a European place might be out of their reach.

ELCHE
Manager: Francisco
Key Arrivals: Ponce (Spartak Moscow)
Key Departures: Piatti (Estudiantes), Marcone (Independiente)
Prediction: Despite finishing as high as 13th last season, Elche were only four points off the relegation zone and are another of the favourites to suffer the drop in 2022-23.

ESPANYOL
Manager: Diego Martinez
Key Arrivals: Vilhena (Krasnodar), Lecomte (Monaco), Souza (Lommel SK), Olivan (Mallorca), Joselu (Alaves)
Key Departures: Diego Lopez (Rayo Vallecano), David Lopez (released), Melendo (released), Merida (released)
Prediction: Six years into the ownership of Chinese businessman Chen Yansheng, Espanyol are a club on the rise (despite their one-season sabbatical in the Segunda Division in 2020-21). A mid-table finish is expected although they will harbour ambitions of the top half.

GETAFE
Manager: Quique Sanchez Flores
Key Arrivals: Portu (Real Sociedad), Seoane (Huesca), Duarte (Granada), Angileri (River Plate)
Key Departures: Duro (Valencia), Olivera (Napoli)
Prediction: For the second season running, Getafe finished as the league's lowest scorers in 2021-22, despite Enes Unal's impressive 16-goal haul. If they can add another goalscorer to the side they'll comfortably finish mid-table, otherwise it could be another frustrating season.

GIRONA
Manager: Michel
Key Arrivals: None
Key Departures: Jairo Izquierdo (Cartagena), Junca (released)
Prediction: Christhian Stuani's 22 goals helped earn Girona promotion and the 35-year-old will be their focal point in attack in La Liga. Their success may depend on how much they're backed by City Football Group, but it's going to be very tough for them to survive.

MALLORCA
Manager: Javier Aguirre
Key Arrivals: Maffeo (Stuttgart)
Key Departures: Sastre (PAOK), Sevilla (Alaves), Olivan (Espanyol), Reina (Malaga)
Prediction: Only the bottom club Alaves lost more league games in 2021-22 than Mallorca, as they finished just one point above the relegation zone. Former Mexico coach Javier Aguirre steered them to safety after taking charge in March and his experience will be crucial in helping them survive again.

OSASUNA
Manager: Jagoba Arrasate
Key Arrivals: Pena (Villarreal), Fernandez (Levante)
Key Departures: Ramalho (Malaga), Sanjurjo (AEK Larnaca)
Prediction: A third mid-table finish in a row since their promotion proves that Osasuna well and truly belong in La Liga. They could have finished even higher had they not failed to win any of their last six games. They will be expecting another mid-table finish.

RAYO VALLECANO
Manager: Andoni Iraola
Key Arrivals: Salvi (Cadiz), D. Lopez (Espanyol), U. Lopez (Athletic Bilbao)
Key Departures: Zidane (Fuenlabrada)
Prediction: Rayo's 12th-placed finish last season flatters to deceive. They won just two of their last 20 league games, including at Camp Nou, and finished four points above the drop zone. Another difficult relegation battle awaits them in 2022-23.

REAL BETIS
Manager: Manuel Pellegrini
Key Arrivals: Willian Jose (Real Sociedad), Luiz Henrique (Fluminense), Luiz Felipe (Lazio)
Key Departures: Robles (released), Tello (released)
Prediction: Manuel Pellegrini has worked wonders with this Betis squad since taking over, finishing in the top six for the second season running and winning the Copa del Rey last season. They have the quality to beat any opposition on their day and will challenge for the Europa League spots once more.

REAL MADRID
Manager: Carlo Ancelotti
Key Arrivals: Tchouameni (Monaco), Rudiger (Chelsea)
Key Departures: Bale (Los Angeles FC), Marcelo (released), Jovic (Fiorentina), Isco (released), Kubo (Real Sociedad)
Prediction: The champions of Europe and Spain will start the season with total confidence that they can retain their domestic trophy. They've strengthened their squad again over the summer, which makes it even harder for those teams around them to keep up.

REAL SOCIEDAD
Manager: Imanon Alguacil
Key Arrivals: Cho (Angers), Mendez (Celta Vigo), Kubo (Real Madrid)
Key Departures: Willian Jose (Real Betis), Portu (Getafe), Januzaj (released)
Prediction: Despite being one of the most entertaining footballing teams to watch in La Liga, *La Real* failed to find their shooting boots last season, hitting the back of the net just 40 times. The Europa League spots are probably the best they can hope for in 2022-23.

REAL VALLADOLID
Manager: Pacheta
Key Arrivals: Plata (Sporting), Monchu (Granada), Sanchez (Birmingham), Asenjo (Villarreal), Escudero (Granada)
Key Departures: Alcaraz (Cadiz), Janko (Bochum), Martinez (Tenerife)
Prediction: Pacheta's side combine a never-say-die attitude with an eagerness to attack, seeing them score more goals than any other side in the Segunda Divison last season. Striker Shon Weissman netted 20 of those and will be key to keeping them up. They should have enough to do so.

SEVILLA
Manager: Julen Lopetegui
Key Arrivals: Marcao (Turkey)
Key Departures: Diego Carlos (Aston Villa), De Jong (PSV), Augustinsson (Aston Villa), Rodriguez (Celta Vigo)
Prediction: Some Sevilla supporters may feel like last season was a missed opportunity, as they failed to break into the top three once again. Ultimately, Champions League football was secured and that will be the aim, and expectation, in 2022-23.

VALENCIA
Manager: Gennaro Gattuso
Key Arrivals: Duro (Getafe), Castillejo (Milan)
Key Departures: Cheryshev (released)
Prediction: Valencia fans haven't had much to cheer about in recent seasons, although they came close to silverware in their pursuit of the Copa del Rey. Without further investment the best they can hope for is to challenge for a Europa Conference League spot.

VILLARREAL
Manager: Unai Emery
Key Arrivals: Morales (Levante), Reina (Lazio)
Key Departures: Asenjo (Real Valladolid), Aurier (released), Pena (Osasuna)
Prediction: The Yellow Submarine have proven their ability in Europe in recent years, winning the Europa League in 2020-21 and reaching the semi-finals of the Champions League last season. They certainly have enough ability to better their seventh-place finish from 2021-22.

Top guns arrive in Eredivisie

Goals galore expected from new cast of top-class forwards

For many relatively unknown strikers, the Eredivisie has been a stage to make a name for themselves. History shows that finishing as the league's top scorer has often been the springboard for a transfer to better and more lucrative leagues, even for players lining up for minnows. The most recent example is Giorgos Giakoumakis, who scored 26 goals for VVV-Venlo as the club were relegated in 2020-21 to earn a lucrative transfer to Celtic.

This time, however, the scoring charts should be led by proven, well-known strikers, after the arrival of some unexpected transfers. Two former top scorers return to the Eredivisie while an unfancied club pulled off a coup that surprised everybody.

Luuk de Jong, after a season on loan at Barcelona, returns from Sevilla for a second spell at PSV. Back in 2018-19 he scored 28 goals, sharing the Golden Boot with Ajax superstar Dusan Tadic. Elsewhere, FC Utrecht managed to sign Bas Dost from Club Brugge, more than a decade after he netted 32 goals for Heerenveen in 2011-12. Both in their 30s, the two target men are back to spend their final years on home soil.

But the real sensation is the arrival of Burak Yilmaz at unfancied Fortuna Sittard. What is a Turkish super striker, who scored 31 goals in 77 caps (including a hat-trick against the Netherlands in a World Cup qualifier last year) and league winner with both Galatasaray (twice) and Lille, doing at a club that only could escape relegation on the final day of last season? The answer is personal relations. The owner of the club is Isitan Gun, who used to be a board member of Galatasaray when Yilmaz, nicknamed the "Bosporus Bull", was playing at the Istanbul club.

Gun is a 46-year-old businessman who bought Fortuna Sittard in 2016, when they were playing in the second division. The southern club has a big history but was wandering around in the wilderness for a long time. Their predecessors, Fortuna 54, were the first professional club in the Netherlands and had a big influence on the introduction of professional football and the Eredivisie in 1956. They had their heyday in the 1980s, reaching the quarter-final of the European Cup Winners' Cup in 1985, losing 5-0 on aggregate to eventual winners Everton.

But then came the downfall. Financial problems endangered their existence, with the only apparent solution a merger with the other three Limburg clubs; the southern province is simply not big enough for all four. Yet, for sentimental reasons, that never happened, making Fortuna, in the second tier since 2003, a marginal

Experienced strikers... Fortuna Sittard new boy Burak Yilmaz (L) and Bas Dost (R) of FC Utrecht

PLAYERS TO WATCH

XAVI SIMONS
(PSV)
The former Barcelona and PSG midfielder is considered the Netherlands' next big hope for the future. After failing to break through, he now has the chance for regular playing time at PSV.

MOHAMED IHATTAREN
(Ajax)
Disciplinary problems, rebellious behaviour and personal issues led to unhappy times at PSV, Juventus and Sampdoria, but if fully focused Ajax could benefit immensely from the young talent.

STEVEN BERGWIJN
(Ajax)
Returns to Ajax, where he played in the youth ranks only to move to PSV before his senior debut. Lively attacker who will probably be Memphis Depay's strike partner at the World Cup.

Eredivisie comeback... Luuk de Jong is back at PSV after three years in Spain

This time, however, the scoring charts should be led by proven, well-known strikers, after the arrival of some unexpected transfers

club in constant danger of going out of existence.

With the arrival of Gun things have finally changed for the better. Fortuna returned to the Eredivisie in 2019 and with Yilmaz in their squad the plan is to reach the sub-top. And it isn't a marketing stunt. Fortuna also showed their ambition by entering the Women's Eredivisie this season. And they will do it with a bang, contracting former Manchester City and Wolfsburg striker Tessa Wullaert, the all-time top scorer for the Belgian national team.

Gun's goal is to attract fans in their seldom sold-out 13,000-seater stadium. Sittard is located in the middle of a vast mining region that contains Belgium and the German Ruhr area. This is an area with a large Turkish population, and the owner hopes to welcome many of them to Sittard.

Whether Ajax have a contender for the top scorer title remains to be seen. They have let Sebastien Haller go to Borussia Dortmund in a €31 million deal, without making any real effort to block it, despite the Franco-Ivorian's 11 Champions League goals (including one against his new club) and league-best 21 Eredivisie goals. The Amsterdam club are backing Brian Brobbey to be that man. He came through the club's youth ranks but went to RB Leipzig last season, only to return during the winter break on loan. Now the clubs wants to make the deal permanent, but at the time of writing, that hasn't happened. Although relatively inexperienced, the 20-year-old forward has some big fans. That includes national team coach Louis van Gaal, who is seriously thinking of selecting the uncapped striker for the World Cup. Brobbey is seen as an alternative for Memphis Depay and gives Van Gaal the opportunity to play different systems.

Back in the 1956-57 season PSV's Coen Dillen scored 43 league goals, a total that according to many will never be surpassed. With Yilmaz, De Jong and Dost all on-board there won't be many better opportunities. Now is the time to do so.

Klaas-Jan Droppert

New term at finishing school

Portugal continues to produce elite talent for the bigger leagues

Liga holders...Porto boss Sergio Conceicao lifts last season's title

We had not yet reached July and Porto's best player in 2021-22 (Vitor Ferreira), Sporting's best player (Pablo Sarabia) and Benfica's best player (Darwin Nunez) had all said goodbye to Portugal's Primeira Liga. Frustrating as it is, Portuguese football fans have long got used to its feeder league status. While it is disappointing to witness the annual exodus of star performers, the huge transfer fees earned and subsequent success of ex-Liga players at the world's top clubs only goes to prove Portugal has become the perfect finishing school for elite footballers.

If anything, the conveyor belt honing the technical and tactical attributes of young players in Portugal is becoming increasingly prolific and the processing of pure football talent is accelerating. Benfica and Porto sold Darwin Nunez and Luis Diaz, respectively, to Liverpool just a few months after becoming nailed-on starters for their Portuguese teams. One impressive season is now enough for up-and-coming Portuguese youth players such as Ferreira (the new PSG man, known as Vitinha) and Fabio Vieira to attract irresistible bids from abroad. At the time of writing, Sporting's Matheus Nunes and Benfica's Goncalo Ramos were being heavily rumoured to follow suit and leave the league in exchange for a windfall for their clubs.

Is it a bad thing for Portuguese football? Fans complain about never being able to build a team to truly compete in Europe, but it is simply not realistic for Portugal's best teams to dream of continental glory in today's football panorama dominated by clubs with limitless resources. So seeing the development of some of the game's biggest names of tomorrow at close

PLAYERS TO WATCH

DAVID CARMO
(Porto)
Back from a terrible ankle injury that kept him out for almost a year, Carmo's superb form for Braga earned him a switch to Porto for a record domestic fee. He is sure to justify it.

FRANCISCO TRINCAO
(Sporting)
Unable to establish himself at Barcelona or Wolves, the supremely talented Trincao will be seeking to make good on his tremendous potential with a new start back in Portugal.

JOAO MARIO
(Porto)
A 22-year-old right-back, converted from a winger, who enjoyed a breakout season as he solved a problem position for Porto. A good bet for the league's next big-money transfer.

Finishing school...ex-Primeira Liga stars Luis Diaz (L) and Darwin Nunez (R) will line up in the English Premier League next season

quarters is as good as it gets. And the league is no less exciting for the yearly talent drain. Brilliant players leave, opening the door for more brilliant players to be forged.

Reacting to an ever-evolving line-up has been at the heart of Porto's recent success. In a 20-year period either side of the turn of the millennium, the Blue and Whites won the league 15 times, as well as the Champions League, UEFA Cup and Europa League trophies. Financial mismanagement and the re-emergence of Benfica brought an end to an unprecedented period of dominance, but under Sergio Conceicao they are now threatening to resume their stranglehold on domestic football.

The conveyor belt honing the technical and tactical attributes of young players in Portugal is becoming increasingly prolific

The former player-turned-coach has guided the club to three titles in five seasons, despite significant Financial Fair Play constraints. He has fully harnessed the fiercely aggressive competitiveness that characterised the club's glory years – and his own playing style – but the 47-year-old is far more than just a motivational manager. Conceicao has proven masterful at adapting the team to the attributes of the players available to him. The 2021-22 vintage played far more technically pleasing football than the more rudimentary teams of preceding seasons, exemplified by the fact the guileful Vitinha was the heartbeat of the side. The departures of Diaz, Vieira and Vitinha do not change the fact that Porto remain the team to beat.

But the Dragons will not have it all their own way. Similarly to Porto under Conceicao, Sporting have been transformed under Ruben Amorim. After leading the Lisbon club to its first championship title for 19 years, the Lions followed up the triumph with another superb campaign, only thwarted in their quest for back-to-back titles by Porto's relentless excellence. Sporting's 85 points would have been enough to finish top or joint top in four of the last seven seasons.

As when winning the league two years ago, Sporting's hopes of coming top of the pile again will rest heavily on a clutch of young players, especially in the attacking third with Marcus Edwards, Francisco Trincao and Pedro Goncalves needing to play key roles to bring success to Alvalade.

On the other side of the capital city, Benfica begin a new season with a new president in place for the first time in almost two decades. One of the first major decisions facing club legend Rui Costa was to hire Roger Schmidt, the first foreign manager at the club since Spaniard Quique Sanchez Flores back in 2008. It feels like the perfect opportunity to start afresh at the Estadio da Luz.

Portugal's most popular club could do well to look to their hated rivals for inspiration on how to get back into a winning groove. In 2019 Porto won the UEFA Youth League. Three seasons later several of that team made significant contributions in the northerners' latest league triumph. Amid the disappointment of another barren season for Benfica in terms of senior trophies, the conquest of the UEFA Youth League was an uplifting boon, as the Eagles became the second Portuguese team to win the competition. The 6-0 battering of Red Bull Salzburg in the final clearly demonstrated that the club's famed Seixal Academy has produced another set of potential stars of the future, with the likes of Diego Moreira and Henrique Araujo (scorer of a hat-trick in the final) seemingly ready to contribute to the senior team.

As ever, there is no lack of candidates when it comes to the next superstars the finishing school will create.

Tom Kundert

Salzburg aim for ten in a row

Gap between Red Bull-owned club and the rest is growing

Talent factory... Salzburg stars Sekou Koita (L), Benjamin Sesko (C) and Maurits Kjaergaard (R)

Since Red Bull's arrival in Salzburg, it has usually been a case of when, rather than if, they will win the championship, and it is hard to imagine that this season will be any different.

Salzburg have won the title for the last nine seasons, and 13 of the last 16, often by runaway margins: 18 points in both 2013-14, when they scored 110 goals and finished with a goal difference of +75, and again in 2017-18.

Not even a new format, where the teams' points totals are halved after two thirds of the season, has been able to stop them and they have still coasted home by 15-point margins in each of the last two seasons. The run has been interrupted only by Rapid Vienna (2007-08), Sturm Graz (2010-11) and Austria Vienna (2012-13).

The finances speak for themselves. Red Bull's squad has a market value of around €174 million – nearly six times more than Rapid Vienna and Sturm Graz, the next two most valuable squads. Salzburg enjoyed a revenue of €112m for the 2020-21 season compared to €40m for Rapid Vienna, the next highest, and they made a profit of nearly €5m. Meanwhile, five of the 12 Austrian Bundesliga clubs had revenue of less than €10m.

Though they have been criticised for ditching Salzburg's traditional violet kit and for trying, unsuccessfully, to wipe out the club's pre-2005 history, the club have used the money wisely. They have one of Europe's best and most technologically advanced academies, aided by a world-class scouting system, and this has enabled them to mount a production line of talent, which they sell on to clubs in bigger leagues. The latest to leave have been Brenden Aaronson and Rasmus Kristensen, sold to Leeds United for €32m and €13m respectively, and last season's top scorer, Karim Adeyemi, to Borussia Dortmund for around €30m.

> "It is almost unrealistic to say we can threaten them"
>
> **Sturm Graz manager Christian Ilzer on Red Bull Salzburg's dominance**

On the field, they have been one of Europe's most enthusiastic exponents of *Gegenpressing* and have single-handedly lifted Austria into the top ten of UEFA's coefficient rankings with their performances in the Champions League and Europa League. With no Adeyemi, this season's goals will probably come from Sekou Koita, who struck 14 in 2020-21 before a doping ban ruled him out for most of last season, while big things are also expected from 19-year-old Slovenia striker Benjamin Sesko.

Austria is one of many European leagues that has introduced the so-called "split season" to try to create a little more drama. In its explanation of the format, the league itself says: "At first glance, the system is complicated but, at the second, it is exciting."

In this case, the 12 teams play each other twice in the regular season and are then divided into two groups, with the top six moving into the Championship Round and the bottom six into the Relegation Round. Their points totals are also halved, and rounded down if needed, and the teams play home and away against the others in their group. The Championship Group winners take the title and the team that finishes bottom of the lower group goes down.

Sturm Graz finished a distant second behind Salzburg last season and even they see no real chance of challenging for the title. "It is almost unrealistic to say we can threaten them," said manager Christian Ilzer, who is beginning his third season at the helm. "It's a different world...but that isn't to say we should stand still." In contrast to Salzburg's young, cosmopolitan line-up, Graz's squad is mainly made up of seasoned Austrian professionals, although only veteran Jakob Jantscher has recently been called up by Austria.

Austria Vienna, third last season, will begin with a points deduction after being penalised for late reporting of their finances to the league's licensing committee. The Violets, who now routinely struggle to renew their licence and have debts of around €63m, made another loss of nearly €5m in 2020-21.

This did not stop them spending €1.3m to sign Marko Raguz from LASK Linz, a surprising amount for a player who has struggled to recover from a cruciate knee injury in late 2020. In fact, they brought in more than half a dozen new players, although at the same time they offloaded even more from last season.

Austria Vienna will at least have European football as they qualified for the Europa Conference League and chairman Gerhard Krisch is optimistic. "We will be competitive in three competitions this season," he said.

Rapid Vienna, who won the last of their record 32 titles back in 2008, finished a disappointing fifth last season and will be starting their first full season under manager Ferdinand Feldhofer. Despite boasting a record 32 titles, their aims are modest: to qualify for the Championship Round and reach the group stage of the Europa Conference League.

Brian Homewood

Brugge remain front-runners

Yet transitional season for the champions offers hope to rivals

Close battle...Union Saint-Gilloise took Brugge down to the wire last season

Last season finished with the rather familiar feel of the two previous campaigns: Club Brugge topped the table, following a compelling regular season and dramatic play-offs. The league's revelation, Union Saint-Gilloise, lacked the stamina to sustain their almost perfect record as the season neared the end. In the play-offs, Brugge, much more experienced and cooler under pressure, won the crucial double-header against the Brussels-based club to retain their Pro League title – a fifth domestic crown in seven seasons.

It had not been a smooth ride. Brugge failed to progress from the group stage of the Champions League, spent €10 million in the winter transfer market and parted ways with successful coach Philippe Clement, the architect of their two previous league triumphs.

After clinching the title, club chairman Bart Verhaeghe said that Brugge had been up against Brighton and their owner Tony Bloom rather than against Union, in reference to Bloom owning both clubs. It was a malign statement, but reflected Brugge's new status. In the last decade, they have usurped Anderlecht as Belgium's most powerful and successful club. Today, Flanders' most popular club yield all the power and financial muscle. Which begs a simple question: who can dethrone them in 2022-23?

> The defending champions' position is far from secure ahead of what promises to be a transitional season

The defending champions' position is far from secure ahead of what promises to be a transitional season. Carl Hoefkens, an in-house choice with no previous experience in the hotseat, was appointed head coach after Albert Schreuder departed for Ajax. He will be tasked with defending the crown without Charles De Ketelaere, the new poster boy of the Belgian game who is on his way to Milan, while the temperamental yet talented Dutch winger Noa Lang might also be on the way out.

On paper, Antwerp should be Brugge's main challengers. In a bid to compete for the title, owner Paul Gheysens has injected another €10m into the club, the ninth capital raise since 2017. Unfortunately, controversy is never far away at Antwerp.

They named Marc Overmars as new technical director just weeks after the Dutchman had been fired by Ajax for sending inappropriate messages to female colleagues. In a news conference, Antwerp general manager Sven Jaecques said that Overmars' values matched with the values of the club, yet admitted that Antwerp had not spoken to their female employees. It was a shocking and inexplicable move. On top of that, and in spite of Belgian authorities' aim to outlaw betting ads by 2025, Antwerp partnered with betFIRST as title sponsor.

The Overmars connection led to the appointment of Mark van Bommel as head coach as well as the acquisition of striker Vincent Janssen from Mexican club Monterrey and ex-Ajax defender Toby Alderweireld from Al Duhail in Qatar.

Inexperienced... new Brugge boss Carl Hoefkens

Anderlecht, who finished third last season, parted ways with coach Vincent Kompany. That was no surprise – no coach lasts longer than three seasons at the club, not even an in-house star. Kompany secured a European ticket but defeats to Gent in the Belgian Cup final and against crosstown rivals Union meant that the season ended in disappointment. In a controversial move, his successor Felice Mazzu arrived from Union. "I am aware that I am replacing an icon of Belgian football, an icon within the coaching world," said Mazzu. "Kompany played for one of the best clubs in Europe. It is not easy to succeed him. I understand that the supporters admire him here. It is now up to me to try to do at least as good as Vincent."

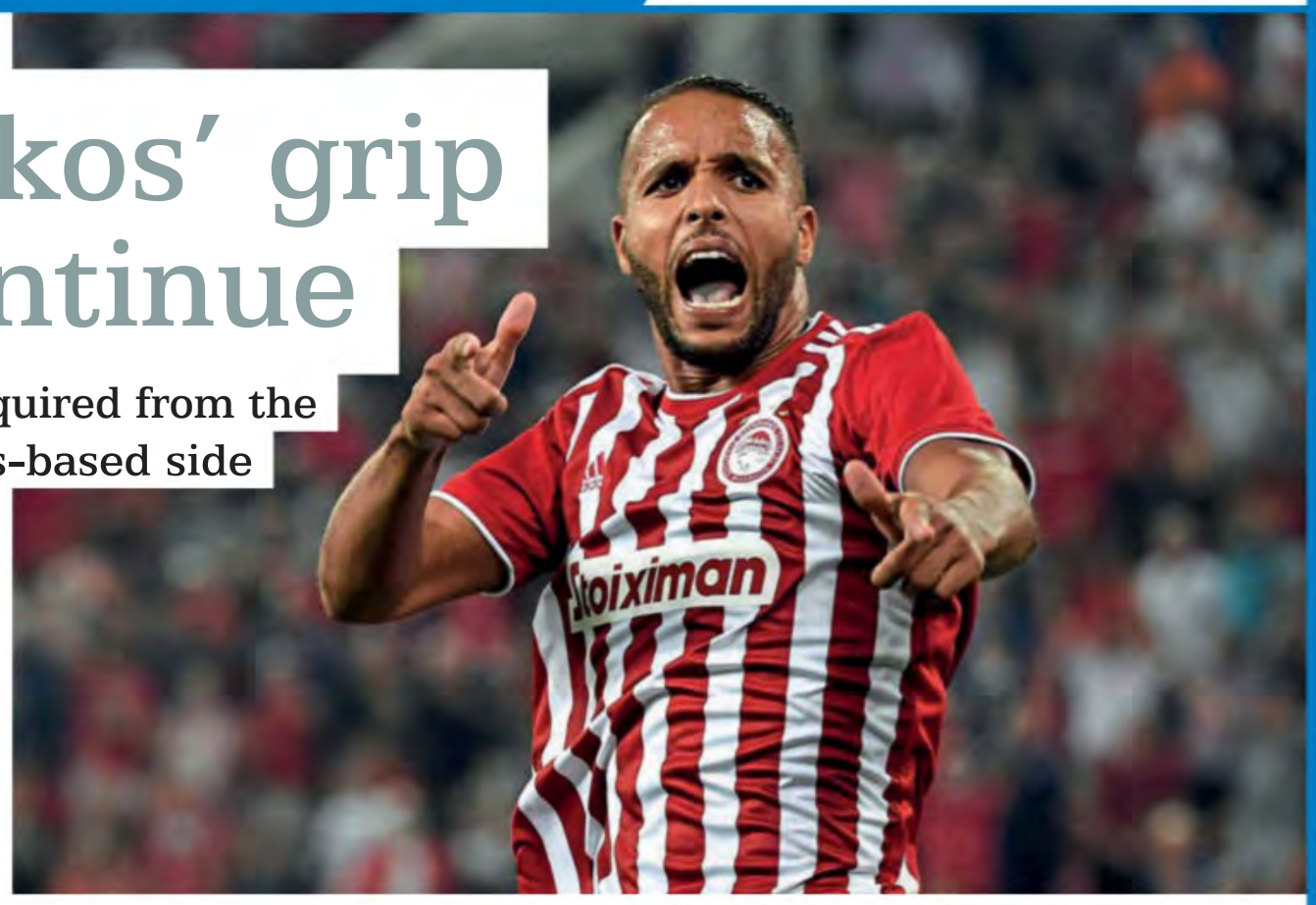
Matching Kompany, however, won't be good enough; Mazzu will need to win the league title. Pre-season friendlies suggested he will employ a 3-5-2 again, the system that brought him success at the Dudenpark. Gent and 2018-19 champions Genk should also be competitive.

At the other end of the table, Turkish-owned Westerlo have returned to the top flight after a five-year absence, a reward for dominating the second division where competition is cut-throat with City Football Group's Lommel SK and John Textor's RWD Molenbeek. Westerlo may not repeat Union's fairy tale, but with a reputation of giant slayers at home they could well cause an upset or two.

Samindra Kunti

Olympiakos' grip set to continue

A Herculean effort is required from the rest to overhaul Piraeus-based side



Staying put... Olympiakos striker Youssef El-Arabi

Any team aspiring to knock Olympiakos off their golden Super League perch know only too well that the odds are stacked against them.

Top of the pile in each of the last three seasons, and in 20 of the last 24, Olympiakos effectively have a monopoly of power, so far ahead that the chasing pack (the Salonika pair of PAOK and Aris, plus Athenian outfits AEK and Panathinaikos) need binoculars to spot them.

Last season was just one more example of Olympiakos cracking the whip and the rest cowering in the corner. By the end of the campaign, Olympiakos had opened a massive 19-point lead over PAOK in second-place. While Olympiakos only suffered three defeats all season, every one of their pursuers were beaten at least ten times. Such is the chasm in class.

Olympiakos set the standards in all areas. They have a shrewd coach in the Portuguese Pedro Martins – at the helm since 2018 and surely destined for a job in one of Europe's top leagues – the type of squad strength in depth which the others can only dream of and a host of genuine match-winners, individuals of the calibre of Moroccan striker Youssef El-Arabi, winger Giorgos Masouras and the Brazilian forward Tiquinho.

> Olympiakos effectively have a monopoly of power, so far ahead that the chasing pack need binoculars to spot them

When it comes to preparing for a new season, Olympiakos never let the grass grow under their feet and have strengthened their ranks this summer with a slew of solid signings, not least Danish international wide-man Philip Zinckernagel – a key contributor to Nottingham Forest's recent promotion to the Premier League – ex-Aris centre-forward Aboubakar Kamara and highly experienced Croatia right-back Sime Vrsaljko, recruited on a Bosman free from Atletico Madrid.

In other good news for the Olympiakos faithful, El-Arabi finally decided to stay put in Piraeus. The contract of the evergreen marksman had been due to expire this summer and the word on the Greek circuit was that clubs in Spain and the Gulf were hoping to headhunt him. Eventually, though, the Moroccan opted for a new two-year deal.

It cannot be stressed enough how important El-Arabi is to Olympiakos. In three seasons at the Karaiskakis Stadium, he has amassed a hefty 78 goals in all competitions, twice prevailing in the Super League top scorer stakes.

PAOK, who sensationally won the Greek title in 2018-19, have a fine coach in the Romanian Razvan Lucescu, now in his second stint with the White-Blacks. But even he has been struggling with PAOK's two biggest weaknesses: inconsistency and a lack of punch up front. The fact that their leading scorer last term was Slovenian central midfielder Jasmin Kurtic speaks for itself. Kurtic, who netted 15 first division goals last season, cannot carry the finishing load alone.

PAOK coach... Razvan Lucescu

New faces on the PAOK block include Uruguayan winger Nicolas Quagliata, recruited from Montevideo side Wanderers and promising young Croat keeper Dominik Kotarski (ex-Gorica). Few PAOK fans shed a tear on hearing the announcement that Croat front-man Antonio Colak had made a switch to Rangers in Scotland. Colak rarely convinced in PAOK colours.

Panathinaikos will once again be relying on the goals of Argentine winger Sebastian Palacios and the emerging talent of young defensive midfielder Sotiris Alexandropoulos. Through the in-door came Slovenian midfielder Adam Cerin (Nuremberg), Romanian left-back Cristian Ganea (Aris), Russian keeper Yuri Lodygin (Giannina) and towering Icelandic central defender Hordur Magnusson (CSKA Moscow).

AEK drew attention to themselves in the off-season with an impressive statement of intent, appointing the former Argentine international Matias Almeyda as head coach and one-time Portugal stopper Bruno Alves as director of sport. New to their playing roster are former Eintacht Frankfurt, Hoffenheim and Panathinaikos playmaker Mijat Gacinovic and Denmark defensive midfielder Jens Jonsson, acquired from Spanish side Cadiz.

Back in the top flight are the Blue-Greens of Levadiakos, pumped up for their first taste of the Super League in three years. The last time they were an elite club, they went through three coaches. Current incumbent Giannis Taousianis will have his fingers crossed for a less harmful fate.

Nick Bidwell

The race is on

Celtic and Rangers both have cause for optimism in this season's title contest

Title race...Celtic and Rangers will lead the way once again

Ange Postecoglou's stark transformation of Celtic was perhaps summed up best by his side's 7-0 win against St Johnstone en route to regaining the Scottish Premiership.

The thrashing was a mission statement about Celtic's football under the Australian manager. It contained two goals from Matt O'Riley – one of which was a stunning finish to complete a 41-pass move – the 21-year-old right-back who had not even been on the radar of most Celtic fans before his signing from MK Dons in January, while two of Postecoglu's J.League recruits, Daizen Maeda and Reo Hatate, were also on the scoresheet.

Celtic Park's 60,000 sell-out crowd loved what they saw, as Postecoglou delivered on the promise he had made after arriving from Yokohama F. Marinos in June 2021: "I just want to create a football team that everyone talks about. I think I can give the Celtic fans a team that is special."

After overturning the huge 25-point deficit on Rangers from 2020-21 to lift Celtic's tenth title in 11 years, Postecoglou ensured that the balance of power in Glasgow swung back to Parkhead, and that despite the Gers' run to last season's Europa League final.

> Postecoglou ensured that the balance of power in Glasgow swung back to Parkhead, and that despite the Gers' run to last season's Europa League final

Underpinning Celtic's title was Postecoglou's eye for talent. In total, the manager brought in 13 players last season, and virtually every one was a success. In addition to O'Riley, Maeda and Hatate, Kyogo Furuhashi proved a steal at £5.8 million after arriving from Vissel Kobe, scoring 20 goals before injury interrupted his season, while Greek striker Giorgos Giakoumakis, another summer recruit, filled the void by scoring 13 goals after January.

Both of last season's loan recruits have been turned into permanent moves. US defender Cameron Carter-Vickers arrived for £6m from Tottenham Hotspur, and stylish winger Jota – a fan favourite after 13 goals – cost £6.5m from Benfica. Argentinian full-back Alexandro Bernabei has arrived from Lanus for £3.75m to take the spending to £17m, with free agent goalkeeper Benji Siegrist arriving from Dundee United to complete the business.

All in all, the new arrivals combined with the development of last season's recruits – plus the leadership of captain Callum McGregor, last season's Scottish Premiership Player of the Year – will make Celtic a formidable opponent for the rest of the league.

Not that Rangers will be daunted by the challenge, having come within a penalty kick of winning the Europa League and lifting the Scottish Cup. Manager Giovanni van Bronckhorst only actually lost two league matches last season – both against Celtic, crucially. Still, margins can be fine in the Scottish Premiership and the Dutchman knows that a derby win or two could easily see the title return to Ibrox as he attempts to build on last season's European excellence.

Mr. Popular... Celtic manager Ange Postecoglou

Indeed, the last time Rangers lost a major European final in 2008, they responded by regaining the league title from Celtic the following season.

Yet the epic run to Seville disguised the financial problems at Ibrox, with the club continuing to rack up significant losses. This partly explains the departure of Joe Aribo, Rangers' scorer in Seville, who has joined Southampton for £10m.

A £300,000 bargain transfer from Charlton Athletic in 2019, the Aribo deal represents a tidy profit for Rangers, and they will hope for a similar result from this year's new recruits: Croatian striker Antonio Colak from PAOK of Greece and Rabbi Matondo from Schalke. The former Manchester City man has, in the past, been compared with both Jadon Sancho and Gareth Bale, and will hope to secure his place in Wales' World Cup squad with some good performances in Scotland.

Elsewhere, Hearts will be hoping to repeat last season's impressive return to the top flight, as they finished third in the league and reached the Scottish FA Cup final (losing to Rangers in extra-time). They have added Alan Forrest – the younger brother of Celtic and Scotland star, James – after his excellent campaign at Livingston. Hearts' success should encourage Kilmarnock, who are back after just one season in the Championship, thanks to experienced ex-Aberdeen manager, Derek McInnes.

Dundee United are back in Europe following a ten-year absence after finishing fourth, but will be without coach Tam Courts after he chose to expand his own European CV by moving to Hungary with Honved. The Tannadice club replaced him with Jack Ross, who had taken Hibernian to third place and two cup finals before his sacking in January. Hibs were even more ruthless with Shaun Maloney, giving him just three months, and have now appointed ex-Sunderland and Bristol City manager Lee Johnson.

Phil Gordon

Three-horse race

Title race is wide open in final season before a format change

Title rivals...Young Boys will hope to reclaim the title from holders Zurich

The Swiss Super League has seen more than its share of one-horse races over the past few seasons but this time there are signs it could serve up a little more in the way of drama. At least three teams, all of them under new managers, are seen as capable of mounting serious title challenges – holders Zurich, Young Boys and Basel.

Having confounded predictions by winning last season's title by a whopping 14 points, Zurich might find it more difficult to defend their crown. Manager Andre Breitenreiter, the architect of their campaign, has followed the well-trodden path to the Bundesliga to join Hoffenheim and been replaced by Franco Foda, previously with Austria.

Foda took Austria to the last 16 at Euro 2020, where they ran Italy close, and the top level of the UEFA Nations League, but their World Cup qualifying campaign for Qatar was a dismal effort and Austria fans tired of his overcautious approach. Meanwhile, Assan Ceesay, one of last season's inspirations, has moved to Serie A side Lecce and defender Becir Omeragic, another key figure, is still recovering from a meniscus injury – and could, in any case, also go abroad.

Young Boys, who won four successive titles between 2018 and 2021, will try to prove that last season was just a brief interruption rather than a shift in the balance of power. They have appointed former Chicago Fire manager Raphael Wicky but lost the services of USA striker Jordan Siebatcheu (Pefok), the league's top scorer last season with 22 goals, who was snapped up by Union Berlin.

Basel have turned to their former striker Alex Frei, Switzerland's all-time leading scorer, to galvanise a team that won eight successive titles between 2010 and 2017. Frei is relatively inexperienced as a manager but performed heroics last season by helping Winterthur win promotion and return to the top flight after a 37-year absence.

Financially, Young Boys are in by far the strongest position after a profit of 14.8 million Swiss francs for the 2021 financial year in contrast to Basel, who lost 14.4m. This was a classic case of Champions League money distorting club finances: Young Boys received 32m for their participation in the 2021-22 group stage but, had Basel taken part instead, the financial results would have been reversed. Down at the other end, Winterthur will be operating on a budget of 6m for the new season.

Whatever happens, the Swiss Football League has already decided the competition needs a makeover and this will be the last season under the current format, which sees the ten teams play each other four times in a league system.

> From 2023-24, the league will be increased to 12 teams and will use a "split season" format

From 2023-24, the league will be increased to 12 teams and use a "split season" format. The teams will play each other twice during the regular season, with the top six going into the Championship Group to play for the title and the bottom six going into a Qualification Group.

The teams then play each other twice within the groups – but there is a further twist at the end. The top two in the Championship Group, who both qualify for Europe, will take part in an NFL-style "best of three" play-off series for the title. The remaining four will join the top four from the Qualification Group in a knockout tournament to determine the remaining European places. The bottom two teams in the Qualification Group will be relegated.

New Zurich boss ...Franco Foda during Euro 2020

While this will prevent the title being wrapped up early, it could also produce a scenario where a team dominates the season only to be beaten in a play-off.

The current season will therefore be regarded as transitional and nobody will be relegated directly, although the bottom side will go into a relegation-promotion play-off.

Winterthur, who have appointed Bruno Berner for his first senior managerial role, will be clear favourites for that spot, despite the impressive celebrations that greeted their promotion. They also face teething problems with their stadium, which was not fully ready for the opening home match against Basel.

Of the other teams, Luzern will look to continue where they left off under coach Mario Frick, Liechtenstein's most capped outfield player and their all-time leading scorer, who helped them pull off a great escape last season.

Lugano are looking to build on an impressive first season under Chicago Fire owner Joe Mansueto when they finished fourth and won the Swiss Cup. Meanwhile, Sion's flamboyant president Christian Constantin has said that he is looking for someone to buy the club from him after 16 years, during which time he has employed approximately 50 coaches. Paolo Tramezzani is currently in his third stint in the hotseat.

Brian Homewood

Italian takeover at Fatih Karagumruk

Andrea Pirlo arrives in Istanbul, while Trabzonspor attempt to defend title

Italian takeover... Andrea Pirlo is back in management

Love for the Italian approach to the beautiful game continues to spread like wildfire at forward-looking Istanbul club, Fatih Karagumruk.

After recruiting a string of former Serie A players – including goalkeeper Emiliano Viviano and striker Fabio Borini – Karagumruk swooped in June to appoint Italian football god Andrea Pirlo as their new head coach.

Pirlo, once a playmaker extraordinaire for Juventus, Milan and Italy, began his managerial career with Juve two years ago, but only lasted one season after finishing a disappointing fourth in the 2020-21 standings.

Following a 12-month sabbatical, Pirlo, 43, is now ready to jump back on the merry-go-round, replacing former Turkey goalkeeper Volkan Demirel as Karagumruk's team leader. Pirlo has signed a one-year deal reportedly worth around €1.5 million plus bonuses, and has reassembled his old Juventus backroom staff.

> **Following a 12-month sabbatical, Pirlo, 43, is now ready to jump back on the merry-go-round**

"For me, it was important to quickly get back into the game after a year off," declared Pirlo at his unveiling in Istanbul. "I'm hopeful that this season will bring good results here. I had contacts with other clubs both in Italy and abroad, but was won over by the ambition shown by the people at Karagumruk. We share the same goals."

The Karagumruk story is quite the fairy tale. Prior to gaining promotion to the Super Lig in the 2019-20 season, they had enjoyed only two other spells in the top flight (1959-63 and 1983-84). Many assumed they would struggle at the top level. Not so; in each of the last two seasons, they have finished a creditable eighth.

Ironically, Pirlo's new home ground, the Ataturk Olympic Stadium, is an arena full of bad memories for him, the place where Milan famously gave up a three-goal lead en route to losing to Liverpool in the 2005 Champions League final.

Another high-profile boss, the much-travelled Portuguese technician Jorge Jesus is currently settling in at Fenerbahce, who were runners-up in last term's Super Lig. Fenerbahce are reportedly paying Jesus some €3m a year and will be looking to the 68-year-old to sprinkle some of his trademark magic dust on the Yellow Canaries. A bombastic straight-talker, Jesus always divides opinion, but is a proven winner, having led Benfica to three Portuguese league titles and Rio giants Flamengo to Copa Libertadores glory in 2019.

Meanwhile at Galatasaray, new head coach Okan Buruk faces the mother of all rebuilds. Last season, the Lions simply fell apart, their 13th-place finish their worst-ever performance in a domestic campaign. The calamities never stopped coming at the Nef Stadium: the team a collective and individual shambles, the debts piling up and talismanic coach Fatih Terim controversially fired in January.

Title defence... Andreas Cornelius scored 15 goals for Trabzonspor last term

Okan Buruk, who led Istanbul Basaksehir to a shock Super Lig triumph in 2019-20, knows every nook and cranny of the Galatasaray set-up. Once an outstanding midfielder, he enjoyed two highly-successful playing spells there, notably helping the club claim the UEFA Cup in 2000.

Reigning champions Trabzonspor, fresh from winning their first national title in 38 years, will feel confident they can repeat the feat. Coach Abdullah Avici is still astutely calling the shots; the spine of the team (goalkeeper Ugurcan Cakir, Brazilian centre-back Vitor Hugo, attacking midfielder Abdulkadir Omur and Danish striker Andreas Cornelius) remains intact and they have added to their attacking options with the signing of Egypt winger Trezeguet from Aston Villa.

Chastened by a dramatic loss of form last season – going from national top dogs to sixth-place also-rans – Besiktas have reinforced their playing ranks with the likes of Moroccan central defender Romain Saiss (ex-Wolves) and on-loan Dutch striker Wout Weghorst (Burnley). The Black Eagles will be marshalled by former Wolfsburg and West Bromwich Albion boss Valerien Ismael, who was brought in to replace Onder Karaveli last spring. Time was too tight for Ismael to truly put his stamp on the Istanbul side. He has no excuses now.

Nick Bidwell

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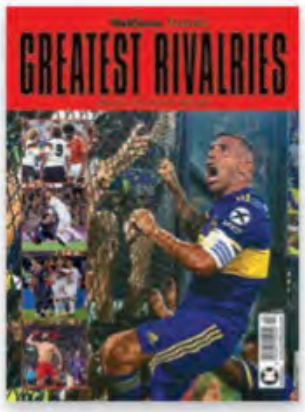

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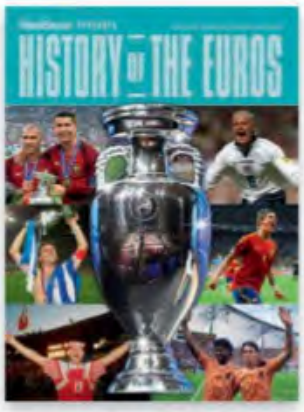

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Glenn Moore

European season ready to begin

Hopes of growth for Europe's big domestic leagues after this summer's Euro finals

As the Euros got underway in England it was not the sight of 70,000 at Old Trafford to watch England's opener, or nearly 20,000 in Sheffield to see Netherlands play Sweden, that underlined the prospects for growth in women's football.

Even more significant was the revelation that the Football Association had rejected several offers from private equity companies to buy the Women's Super League.

The suitors wanted to capitalise on the success of the Euros as the WSL headed into what promises to be another breakthrough season with Liverpool back in the top tier and several clubs increasing their commitment.

Private equity companies have invested heavily in sport in recent years. According to US analysts PitchBook, these mainly US-based companies spent $51 billion in the sector last year, $22 billion of that in Europe.

Clubs have been the main target with teams as disparate as Chelsea, Standard Liege, Vasco da Gama and Genoa being partly or wholly owned by US-based investment companies.

However, with club fortunes capricious – relegation, or simply failing to make the Champions League can severely affect finances – leagues and organisations have become a focus.

Stakes have been taken in entities as varied as Six Nations rugby and La Liga with a deal for the women's tennis tour in the works.

Most agreements promise cash up front in return for a slice of future broadcast and sponsorship income – or complete ownership, such as with Formula One motor racing.

Such a deal, for £150m, was reportedly offered for the WSL but the FA instead tapped the Premier League for £25m investment. The intention is to maintain the current steady progress with the top two tiers moved into a wholly-owned FA subsidiary early next year with a view to forming an independent company when the sums add up.

WSL is unlikely to be financially sustainable until at least the next TV deal – due in 2024. At present most teams lose money (and are bailed out by their parent men's club) though revenue has continued to increase, even during COVID-19. But the fact private equity companies see it as a potential money-spinner underlines the positive trajectory.

On the pitch Chelsea start the campaign clear favourites to win a third successive league and cup double. Emma Hayes has settled for some minor upgrades to her squad with West Ham's Czech midfielder Katerina Svitkova arriving alongside defenders Kadeisha Buchanan (Lyon) and Eve Perisett (Bordeaux).

> Significant was the revelation that the Football Association had rejected several offers from private equity companies to buy the Women's Super League

While Arsenal, like many clubs, bided their time until after the Euros, Manchester City overhauled their squad. Still built around an English core there is now also a Spanish inflection with several recruits from the Primera. Young talent continues to be invested in with Australian teenager Mary Fowler (Montpellier) and English goalkeeper Sandy MacIver (Everton) signed.

Chelsea star... Pernille Harder

Unbeatable... Barca won every game on the way to last season's title

Manchester United, now with Canadian striker Adriana Leon (West Ham), and Tottenham are the most likely to upset this established big three. Everton (Brian Sorensen) and West Ham (ex-England left-back Paul Konchesky) are under new management. Reading, following the relegation after years of under-investment of 2014 Champions League semi-finalists Birmingham, are the only WSL team not backed by a men's Premier League outfit.

The first season of Serie A Femminile as a fully-professional league has attracted some major signings. Most notable is Swedish international Kosovare Asllani, who has joined Milan after three years in Madrid where she was often the inspiration behind Real's growth from newly-formed club to Champions League entrant.

Perennial champions Juventus, seeking a sixth successive title, have landed Iceland's captain Sara Bjork Gunnarsdottir from Lyon and Dutch forward Lineth Beerensteyn from Bayern Munich. Runners-up Roma strengthened defensively, adding Swede Elin Landstrom (Inter) and Austria's Carina Wenninger (Bayern Munich on a year's loan).

In Germany, Wolfsburg and Bayern have contested the title for the last decade, and there's little reason not to expect that to continue. The She-Wolves will be favourites to lift their eighth title in 11 years having brought in experienced defender Marina Hegering from Bayern, and Sara Agrez (Turbine Potsdam).

Bayern have responded by signing England's Georgia Stanway (Manchester

City), France's Emelyne Laurent (Lyon), Brazil's Tainara (Bordeaux) and Norway's Emilie Bragstad (Rosenborg).

However, there is interest in the progress of the last club outside that duopoly to finish in the top two, Eintracht Frankfurt. In 2014, when they came two points behind champions Wolfsburg, they were a stand-alone women's team, 1 FFC Frankfurt, with four Champions League and seven domestic crowns.

Then came Wolfsburg, Bayern and other clubs backed by men's teams and they dropped behind, so in 2020 they merged with Eintracht Frankfurt. Last season they came third. That was still 13 points behind Wolfsburg but was their best finish since 2015 and garnered a Champions League qualifying slot. This summer they have signed Essen's leading scorer Carlotta Wamser with more recruits likely.

In Spain – where venture capital's interest in WSL will have been keenly noted given La Liga's own deal – the Primera is likely to remain with Barcelona given they won every game last season finishing with a 24-point advantage. Their focus is likely to be on regaining the Champions League title from Lyon, and to that end England right-back Lucy Bronze (Manchester City) and Brazil forward Geyse Ferreira (Madrid CFF) have joined.

One of the league's more intriguing arrivals is Scottish midfielder Caroline Weir, who traded Manchester City for Real Madrid, while Czech women's footballer of the year Andrea Staskova has left Juventus for Atletico Madrid where she will team up with Spain's Irene Guerrero (Levante).

Top two...Bayern and Wolfsburg will compete for the Frauen-Bundesliga

The French title race, as ever, is likely to be between Lyon and Paris Saint-Germain with the former's usual supremacy underlined by the switch from Paris of Germany's Sara Dabritz.

PSG's continuing ambition is highlighted by the arrival of Dutch forward Lieke Martens from Barcelona but they will have a new coach whose first task will be to soothe the internal divisions that undermined their title defence last season.

Round-up

Re-match...Real Madrid beat Manchester City last season

MAN CITY FACE ANOTHER SPANISH INQUISITION

Manchester City and Real Madrid were placed on a collision course in the Champions League first qualifying round. Should City beat Tomiris-Turan of Kazakhstan, and Real defeat Austria's Sturm Graz, both on August 18, they will face each other in a one-off match on August 21. City have lost to Spanish opposition the last four seasons, including to Real last year.

The first qualifying round consists of four-team clusters with a "semi-final" and "final" producing one qualifier into late September's 24-team second round, which is a straight knockout. The winners of that join Barcelona, Wolfsburg, Chelsea and holders Lyon in the 16-team group stage.

Elsewhere in round one Juventus need to beat Luxembourg's Union FC then the winner of Flora Tallinn v Israel's Kiryat Gat. Other groupings include PAOK/Swansea v Ferencvaros/Rangers; Paris/Servette v Glasgow City/Roma; Ajax/Kristianstads v Fortuna Hjorring/Eintracht Frankfurt.

Rangers and Roma are among the clubs making their debuts in the competition.

LEROUX JOINS ANGEL CITY

Angel City moved quickly to compensate for the loss of Christen Press with a torn ACL by recruiting fellow US World Cup winner Sydney Leroux from Orlando Pride.

Pride have continued with former Middlesbrough and Orlando City defender Seb Hines as interim coach in the wake of the suspension of Amanda Cromwell and assistant Sam Greene.

Injury heartbreak...Alexia Putellas

INJURED PUTELLAS FACES A YEAR ON THE SIDELINES

Alexia Putellas, current FIFA Best and Ballon d'Or holder, missed the Euros after rupturing her anterior cruciate ligament in training on the eve of the finals. With her recovery time estimated at "ten to 12 months" the Barcelona player faces a fight to be fit for the 2023 World Cup. Spain had also lost Jenni Hermoso to a knee injury.

Ruled out ...Barbra Banda

GENDER VERIFICATION RULES BANDA OUT OF WAFCON

Barbra Banda, Zambia's captain, was ruled out of the Women's Africa Cup of Nations after failing gender eligibility tests.

Banda, who hit back-to-back hat-tricks at the Tokyo Olympics last year, was one of four Zambian players reported to have been affected by gender eligibility.

2022 World Cup watch

Mark Gleeson casts his eye over the African players bidding to make a name for themselves in Qatar

1 Hannibal MEJBRI
(TUNISIA)

The 19-year-old midfielder made eight times as many appearances for his national team Tunisia as he did for club side Manchester United last season, but he will be hoping Erik ten Hag's faith in youth will improve his chances of regular football at Old Trafford and a spot in the Eagles of Carthage's World Cup squad come the winter.

With his flying mop of curly hair, Mejbri has been a conspicuous presence for the North Africans over the last ten months, making appearances in the FIFA Arab Cup, Africa Cup of Nations and the World Cup play-offs, plus the shock Kirin Cup win in Japan this summer, albeit mostly from the bench. A former French youth international at U16 and U17 level, there are high hopes that Mejbri will become an influential playmaker for the Tunisians.

2 Iliman NDIAYE
(SENEGAL)

From the obscurity of Boreham Wood and Hyde United in the English non-league game to the possibility of playing at the World Cup, the Sheffield United attacking midfielder has seen his star rise rapidly. Ndiaye received a call-up from Senegal boss Aliou Cisse in June after his first full season with the Blades and debuted in an Africa Cup of Nations qualifier against Benin.

"He had very, very big eyes since the beginning of the week," said Cisse of Ndiaye's first contact with the star-studded Senegal squad, just months after they were crowned African champions. "He's a boy who has quality, capable of playing everywhere. He has a good mentality."

3 Denis ODOI
(GHANA)

Odoi's solitary international cap for Belgium against Montenegro in 2012 was in a friendly, opening the door a decade later for a switch to the country his father hailed from. Another chance for the *Diables Rouges* never came for the ex-Anderlecht and Fulham full-back, but Odoi says it was a surprise when Ghana called him up for the World Cup play-off against Nigeria in March. He had never even been to Ghana before, and has had no contact with his father for over a decade, but now looks set to go to Qatar in a dream scenario he could not have envisioned last year.

4 Tarik TISSOUDALI
(MOROCCO)

Six months ago, before the Africa Cup of Nations finals kicked off, the Gent forward was not even in the Morocco squad. But now, after a late call-up, brief cameos at the tournament in Cameroon and crucial goals in the subsequent World Cup play-offs, the 29-year-old looks likely to lead the attack in Qatar.

It has been a whirlwind ten months for the Amsterdam-born forward who had a journeyman career before last season, when he hit 27 goals in all competitions for Gent and helped them win the Belgian Cup. He also won the "Ebony Shoe" – the award handed out each year to the best African player in the Belgian league. He is hoping he might get a move to a bigger club, but, he says: "If I have to stay, then I will be giving it my all."

5 Andre-Frank ZAMBO ANGUISSA
(CAMEROON)

Zambo Anguissa completed a permanent move to Napoli in June after a successful loan season in Italy, despite Fulham's promotion back to the Premier League at the first attempt.

The 26-year-old, who has also had spells at Marseille and Villarreal and has won 42 international caps, is the engine room for the Indomitable Lions, and was a regular for Napoli in both Serie A and the Europa League last campaign.

Spotted aged 18 at a tournament held specifically for agents seeking talent to take to Europe, his story is the "dream come true" tale that many Africans lie awake at night hoping to emulate. A World Cup appearance in Qatar will simply add another dimension to that remarkable journey.

6 Amine HARIT
(MOROCCO)

Amid the furore over Noussair Mazraoui and Hakim Ziyech's international futures, the inclusion of Amine Harit in Morocco's June internationals almost went unnoticed.

The 25-year-old attacking midfielder hadn't played for Morocco for 20 months, but forced his way back with his Marseille form, where his fortunes were revived on loan while Schalke were working on their return to the Bundesliga.

A real confidence player, he took a while to gain the confidence of then-Marseille boss Jorge Sampaoli, but eventually proved his worth to gain another chance for his country.

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World Service

INCORPORATING Global diary

Exclusive reports from our worldwide network of correspondents

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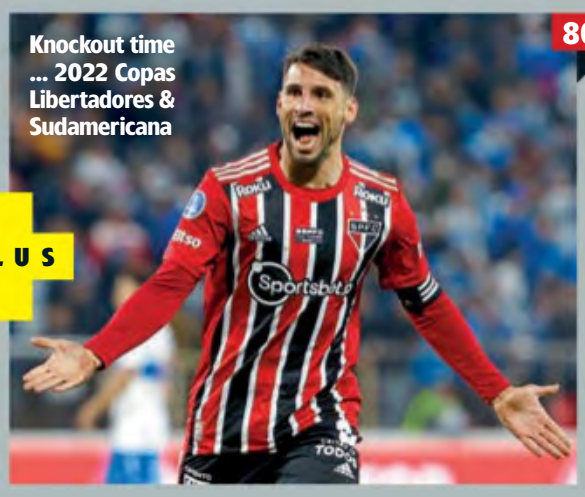

Knockout time ... 2022 Copas Libertadores & Sudamericana 80

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Slovakia

LUKAS VRABLIK

England take Under-19s title

Young Lions produce comeback wins in both the semis and the final to win Euros

Israel came very close to a real sensation. In the 40th minute of the European U19 Championship final in Trnava, western Slovakia, their U19 side surprisingly took a 1-0 lead against England.

Three days before that, Israel had beaten France – tipped by many as the tournament favourites – and it looked like they were on the way to another upset. Led by the technical and intelligent Oscar Gloukh in midfield, they dominated the first half.

Gloukh, 18, only made his senior debut for Maccabi Tel Aviv in March. He became one of the stars of the tournament, impressing with his ability to carry the ball forwards, and he showcased that perfectly in the counter-attack that led to Israel's opener, turning inside the penalty area and finishing beyond England goalkeeper Matthew Cox.

It was a great start, but England equalised shortly after half-time through Callum Doyle. A tense final went into extra-time, where England made their dominance count with two more goals made in Aston Villa's academy: first by midfielder Carney Chukwuemeka, then by substitute Aaron Ramsey.

"You dream of times like this, and for it to actually happen is a dream

Set-piece specialists ...Alex Scott heads England's equaliser against Italy in the semi-final

Ones to watch...England's Carney Chukwuemeka dribbles past Italy midfielders Fabio Miretti and Cesare Casadei

come true," said Chukwuemeka after the final whistle.

The Villa starlet, who already has a number of Premier League appearances to his name, was among England's leading lights during the tournament, alongside Harvey Vale (Chelsea), Jamie Bynoe-Gittens (Borussia Dortmund), and Alfie Devine and Dane Scarlett (both Tottenham).

It's a talented group of players that managed to win all of their games up to the final, while also showing great resilience in coming back after falling behind twice: in the final and also in the semi-final against Italy.

The tournament win was also a reward for England coach Ian Foster, who was part of the U17s coaching set-up who won the World Cup in India back in 2017. "We are very blessed as a nation with our academies. When [the players] come into the England pathway they are technically outstanding. We don't just look for good footballers, we look for good people as well, and they are outstanding," said the former Dundalk boss.

Israel, the tournament's surprise packages, put up a good fight, becoming the first Israeli side to ever reach the final of UEFA competition. Coach Ofir Haim built a hard-working team and there is a hope they can replicate their success at senior level with this latest "golden generation".

"In Israel, footballers are taught to win from a very early age. Victory is the most important thing," says Uri Levy, an Israeli football writer for *BabaGol*. "That's good in tournaments like this one, but in the senior national team it's a problem because we lack in the technical and tactical part, and as a national team we can't compete with the best in Europe.

"[U19 success] is a combination of talent, determination and a certain mindset. Hopefully this generation will mark the change and bring better investment in our youth."

They played excellently in the semi-final against France, a team with several players with a broad experience at a senior level, and exceptional talents. Striker Loum Tchaouna, who made his Ligue 1 debut for Rennes last September, was the tournament's top scorer with four goals, while his strike partner Alan Virginius of Sochaux added three. Yet it wasn't enough for France, and a semi-final loss was a big disappointment to them.

> "You dream of times like this, and for it to actually happen is a dream come true"
>
> England midfielder Carney Chukwuemeka

Italy were also disappointed to go out to England after taking a 1-0 lead in the semi-final, before being undone by two set-piece goals. Juventus' wonderkid Fabio Miretti ran the show in the midfield and is definitely one to watch in the near future.

All four semi-finalists secured their spot in the next year's Under-20 World Cup in Indonesia. They were joined by the hosts, Slovakia, who beat Austria 1-0 in a tense play-off between the two third-placed sides.

Slovakia's qualification for the World Cup is considered to be a big achievement for the country, but it has also led to a mixed discussion between the fans, who weren't satisfied with the team's playing style. They still came to support them in bigger numbers than at recent games of Slovakia's senior team though, which is currently going through a big crisis.

Israel starlet... Oscar Gloukh takes on France

South Sudan

MARK GLEESON

Diaspora powering South Sudan's AFCON bid

The East African country is recruiting players from Australia as it seeks to qualify for its first-ever Africa Cup of Nations

Awer Mabil converted the decisive penalty in June for Australia to book their berth at the World Cup, expertly tucking away the Socceroos' sixth kick of the shootout against Peru in Doha to settle matters. It was, he said, a "thank you to Australia on behalf of my family".

Mabil was born in a refugee camp in Kenya as his parents fled the conflict in South Sudan. His family were offered sanctuary in Australia, and he has since gone on to become an international footballer.

The South Sudanese community in Australia totals over 10,000, many of who were resettled Down Under from the refugee camps dotted across East Africa.

It is from this migrant community that South Sudan's football team have looked for reinforcements as they take aim at a first-ever place at the Africa Cup of Nations finals.

While Mabil, and Ruon Tongyik, have played for Australia and cannot switch allegiance, South Sudan have already capped several from Down Under. Abraham Majok played for Western Sydney Wanderers in the Asian Champions League and Australia at Under-23 level before switching allegiance and debuting for South Sudan in the AFCON preliminary qualifying round in March.

Valentino Yuel, who has played in the A-League, and Adelaide City's Kur Kur were also recently handed first caps, while Friday Zico, a semi-professional from Perth, and goalkeeper Majak Mawith, who plays in the state league in Victoria, were the first to be recruited.

There are also South Sudanese communities in Canada and the US, from where players have been picked,

LEFT TO RIGHT: Aussie recruits... Abraham Majok, Kur Kur and Valentino Yul in action in Australia

Socceroos superstar...Awer Mabil celebrates during Australia's penalty shootout win over Peru in the inter-confederational World Cup play-off

but it is Australia that has a real harvest, allowing South Sudan to emulate so many African countries who diligently look to bolster their chances with talent from the Diaspora.

"They give a lot in many ways, not only on the field, but especially outside because they are coming from the American system, Australian system or they are first of all sportsmen," says South Sudan coach Stefano Cusin, formerly assistant manager at Wolverhampton Wanderers.

"They know what best to eat, they know when it's time for sleep. I have one player for example, William Akio, who is from Canada. When he's coming to camp, he's got three bags with him with all the stuff he needs, for massage, vitamins.

"They are more professional, they have more experience because they are coming from countries where they have been exposed to sports generally, not only football.

"But most importantly they give us something on the pitch because they come from clubs competing in much more competitive leagues," adds the Italian coach, who took charge in September 2021.

Cusin says there have been no problems in the relationship between those from western countries and with western attitudes, and the home-based players, from much more modest and traditional backgrounds.

"Everybody has the [same] target. They want to be the generation that can give us something important.

> **South Sudan is the newest of all the football nations and have been steadily improving but must still be considered an outside bet**

So the motivation is there in the squad. But also as coach, I have the responsibility to make sure that everybody respects everybody."

South Sudan is the newest of all the football nations and have been steadily improving but must still be considered an outside bet. They were admitted to the FIFA ranks ten years ago and have competed in four Cup of Nations qualifying competitions, plus two for the World Cup, albeit in the preliminary round where they were eliminated after only two matches.

For the next Cup of Nations finals, in the Ivory Coast at the start of 2024, they beat Djibouti 5-2 on aggregate in the March preliminary round and were drawn in Group G with Congo, Gambia and Mali.

They have lost their opening two matches in the group – away in the Gambia and at home to Mali in a game played in neighbouring Uganda because their own stadium is still under construction – but coach Cusin says result must be seen in terms of a long-term project.

"It is important to understand who we are, first of all, because if we are South Sudan but think that we are Senegal, we start badly. We have to understand what we have, what we want to achieve, what is the target, and the timing.

"The project is to be competitive, from 2023 onwards. The first two years I have not been asked to win matches, they just want to grow the team and we are improving."

Saudi Arabia

JOHN DUERDEN

Al Hilal clinch exciting come-from-behind title

Odion Ighalo helps Al Hilal to third league in a row in topsy-turvy title chase

Champions... Al Hilal fans celebrate their team's victory over Al Ittihad

The 2021-22 Saudi Professional League season was one for the ages. It actually lasted for ages too, starting in mid-August 2021 and finishing over ten months later. There were breaks for World Cup qualification, the Asian Champions League, the death of United Arab Emirates president Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan in May, and Asia's Under-23 Championship (which Saudi Arabia won in June without conceding a goal), before it finally ended on June 27.

Heading into that final round of games, title rivals Al Hilal of Riyadh and Jeddah's Al Ittihad were level on points. At the other end of the table, Al Hazm had long been doomed but there were seven other teams in genuine danger of taking one of the other two places in the drop zone.

At the top, it was Al Hilal who triumphed, defeating Al Faisaly 2-1 with both goals coming from Nigerian Odion Ighalo, the former Manchester United marksman, who finished the season as the league's top scorer with 24. It was an 18th title and a third in succession that few thought possible, never mind likely, back in February. When Argentine coach Ramon Diaz succeeded Leonardo Jardim, Al Hilal were 16 points behind rivals Al Ittihad, the runaway leaders. Yet the Asian champions won 11 of their last 12 games,

Key clash...Al Hilal's Jang Hyun-soo (L) challenges Al Ittihad's Abderrazak Hamdallah (R)

including two crucial victories over Al Ittihad, to take the title by two points.

Ighalo gets the goals but Salem Al Dawsari and Salman Al Faraj were the leaders on the pitch and will be Saudi Arabia's two most important players at the World Cup. The addition of Michael from Flamengo in January added a lively presence in attack. With Moussa Marega, Andre Carrillo and Matheus Pereira, plus more Saudi Arabian internationals, Al Hilal have strength in depth that rivals can't match. They needed it, as their commitments at the FIFA Club World Cup and then the Asian Champions League meant that they played more games in the first half of 2022 than anyone else in Saudi Arabia: 29, compared to Al Ittihad's 18.

All thought the more manageable schedule would benefit Ittihad, especially as they also were not short of talent. Brazilian attackers Romarinho and Igor Coronado were formidable, especially with Moroccan goal machine Abderrazak Hamdallah joining from Al Nassr. Ahmed Hegazi was perhaps the best centre-back in the league, although an injury picked up while on Africa Cup of Nations duty with Egypt kept the former West Bromwich Albion man out for more than three months.

At first, he wasn't missed. From October to February, the Tigers picked up 37 out of a possible 39 points and opened up a double-digit lead at the top of the table. That run was stopped in early March as a first meeting with Al Hilal ended in a 2-1 defeat. It meant that there were just eight rather than nine fingers on the trophy but doubts were sown. Al Ittihad lifted the last of their nine championships in 2009 and there were concerns that a dry run was in danger of becoming a bona fide drought. It wasn't helped by the 18-month ban given to Fahad Al Muwallad in May for failing a drugs test. National team boss Herve Renard will also miss the tricky winger at the World Cup.

The Jeddah giants recovered to win the next two but then threw away a 3-1 lead in early May to Al Feiha to draw 4-4. It was followed by a 3-1 loss in the return match with Al Hilal and the wobble was well and truly on. In all, Al Ittihad dropped 13 points from their last eight games and it was not a surprise that it all ended with a tame 0-0 draw at home to struggling Al Batin and goalkeeper Marcelo Grohe in tears. Recovering from this massive setback may not be easy.

It was a bad night all round for the city of Jeddah as Ittihad's bitter local rivals Al Ahli went down for the first time in their illustrious history. Champions as recently as 2016 and Asian Champions League finalists in 2012, the greens would have survived with a win over Al Shabab in the final game but drew 0-0. There was enough talent to stay up but with a bunch of ageing foreign stars, an over-reliance on Syrian striker Omar Al Somah for goals and rumours of unrest behind the scenes, the drop was a shock more than a surprise.

Al Faisaly also went down despite making it to the knockout stages of the 2022 Asian Champions League thanks to their King's Cup success in the previous year. Martin Boyle joined from Hibernian in mid-season and as impressive as the Australian winger was, his efforts were not quite enough.

The story of the season is Al Hilal's barnstorming finish, Al Ittihad's poor capitulation and Al Ahli's relegation. The team from Riyadh will now look to strengthen for the new season while their Jeddah rivals will need some time to process everything that happened.

It was an 18th title and a third in succession that few thought possible, never mind likely, back in February. When Argentine coach Ramon Diaz succeeded Leonardo Jardim, Al Hilal were 16 points behind rivals Al Ittihad

Top scorer... Odion Ighalo

Suspended... Saudi Arabia and Al Ittihad winger Fahad Al Muwallad

South America

TIM VICKERY

Copa Libertadores knockout round sees familiar pattern

Brazil and Argentina's dominance of South America's top club competition continues

Since the change to a year-long format in 2017, South America's Copa Libertadores has been dominated by Argentina and Brazil, a stranglehold that has become complete in 2022 with the big two monopolising all of the quarter-final places.

And, with a 5-3 split in Brazil's favour, the odds are probably on a third consecutive all-Brazilian final.

Palmeiras, champions in the last two years, are not going to be easy to dethrone. Their 8-0 aggregate slaughter of Paraguay's Cerro Porteno was chillingly precise, closing down the game, not giving their opponents a chance and then taking them apart.

On fire...Palmeiras forward Rony netted four goals as his side hammered Cerro Porteno

Winners in 2019 and beaten finalists last year, Flamengo can be even more eye-catching, but are much more uneven. They hit the heights in their second-leg 7-1 demolition of Colombia's Tolima, with centre-forward Pedro in magnificent form. But the first leg is also part of the Flamengo story; they won 1-0, but could easily have conceded four in the first half.

In a repeat of last year's semi-final, Palmeiras now come up against

Close clash... Corinthians edged out Boca Juniors on penalties

Brazilian double winners Atletico Mineiro, who had to work much harder for their place in the last eight. They were clearly better than Emelec of Ecuador, but let things slip in the away leg after a dominant first half and drew 1-1. In front of their own fans, they piled on the pressure and the only threat they faced was the prospect of a shootout as the Ecuadorians held them at bay. It took a slightly fortunate Hulk penalty to get them over the line.

And Corinthians, who now face Flamengo, rode all of their luck to get past Boca Juniors of Argentina. Boca were slightly better in Sao Paulo and dominant in Buenos Aires, where Corinthians – admittedly missing several first-team players – failed to produce a single shot. Both games finished goalless, largely because Boca centre-forward Dario Benedetto was horribly out of form. Benedetto had the chance to clinch matters in the shootout, but fired high over the bar. Corinthians kept their nerve to win through, and now have almost a month to improve form and fitness.

The other Brazilian side are Luiz Felipe Scolari's revitalised Athletico Paranaense, who just managed to get past Libertad of Paraguay. Roque Santa Cruz scored a wonderful solo goal in the second leg to level the aggregate scores. But when it seemed that a shootout was inevitable, Athletico's strength in depth tipped the balance, with substitute Romulo deciding things with a late goal.

Athletico now face Estudiantes, who all through this year's competition have looked the strongest challengers from Argentina. They fought hard to secure a 1-1 draw away to Brazilian debutants Fortaleza, and then, tactically and emotionally were far the better side in La Plata, winning more easily than the 3-0 scoreline suggests.

There is a guarantee of one semi-finalist from Argentina, and whoever it is it will not be a team that featured among the pre-tournament favourites. Talleres of Cordoba reached the last eight for the first time after a 3-1 aggregate win over Colon of Santa Fe. Talleres are on their second coach of the year, with much-travelled Portuguese Pedro Caixinha taking over shortly before the Libertadores kicked off. And in Alexander Medina, Velez Sarsfield have their third boss of a turbulent 2022, which started badly and got no better in the early stages of the competition but has now picked up in remarkable style. Their 1-0 aggregate win over giant River Plate was just about deserved – though VAR controversially chalked off what would have been a leveller right at the end. The win was a fine achievement for a young Velez side – and a bitter disappointment for Marcelo Gallardo's River, who every year since lifting the trophy in 2018 have fallen at an earlier stage.

Magnificent... Flamengo striker Pedro scored four goals versus Tolima

Palmeiras, champions in the last two years, are not going to be easy to dethrone. Their 8-0 aggregate slaughter of Paraguay's Cerro Porteno was chillingly precise

There is also major disappointment for four South American countries, for whom international club competition in 2022 has come to an early conclusion. If the Libertadores is becoming increasingly restricted, at least the Copa Sudamericana, the Europa League equivalent, offers wider opportunities.

Going into the second round, all ten nations still had an interest in the action. The end of the road, though, has since arrived for Bolivia, Chile, Colombia and Paraguay. Here, too, Brazil is dominant, with four of the quarter-finalists – no one else has more than one. And it would have been five had Venezuela's Deportivo Tachira not pulled off a famous shootout victory away to Santos – a message that even in a scenario of growing predictability, football is always capable of springing a surprise.

Revitalised ...Athletico Paranaense coach Luiz Felipe Scolari

QUARTER-FINAL DRAW

Athletico Paranaense v Estudiantes
Corinthians v Flamengo
Velez Sarsfield v Talleres
Atletico Mineiro v Palmeiras

Andorra

STEVE MENARY

Pique aiming high

FC Andorra, the club owned by the Barcelona defender, begin life in the Spanish second tier after remarkably swift journey

Owner...Pique holds an FC Andorra shirt following his takeover

Gerard Pique's playing career may be nearing its end but the Barcelona defender is in his salad days as a club owner and this season his revolution in the Pyrenees will face its biggest test as FC Andorra – the club that Pique's Kosmos Holdings bought only three and a half years ago – makes its debut in the Spanish second tier.

Founded in 1942, FC Andorra joined the Spanish league system six years later and reached the third tier (Segunda Division B) in 1981, remaining at that level for 17 years.

For the next 20 years the club drifted around the Catalan regional divisions, until Pique's Kosmos Group arrived in December 2018. The takeover produced immediate results, with the club winning the regional First Catalan Division with a 2-0 final-day victory over UE Vilassar de Mar.

Shortly afterwards, Pique's investment would prove even more advantageous as the club secured an immediate and unusual double promotion when a spot in Segunda B opened. CF Reus Deportiu were relegated as a result of financial problems, and FC Andorra saw off competition for the vacant space from Zamora, Real Jaen, Linares Deportivo and FC Intercity by paying €452,022 to replace Reus.

> **For 20 years the club drifted around the Catalan regional divisions, until Pique's Kosmos Group arrived in December 2018**

Manager... Eder Sarabia during his time as Barca assistant

In January 2021, Pique brought in Eder Sarabia as manager. The son of Athletic Bilbao legend Manuel Sarabia had a brief, turbulent spell at Barcelona as assistant manager but in May he led FC Andorra to the Segunda Division with a 1-0 home win over already relegated UCAM Murcia.

In his first senior management role, promotion was a notable achievement for Sarabia, who subsequently celebrated by fulfilling a promise to cycle to his native Bilbao.

Yet Andorra's status as a tax haven has made the club's promotion a controversial one. Kosmos secured sponsorships with major Andorran companies including MoraBanc and Pyrenees, but also benefits from lower income tax in the tiny principality, which has a population of 85,000.

Until this summer, Andorran players paid 10 per cent personal income tax on contracts over €300,000 euros compared to 47 per cent tax in Spain, which obviously gave Pique's club an advantage in terms of budget. To avoid this, La Liga has agreed a principle of equality rule that limits FC Andorra – or any other club from the Pyrenean country – the cost of the squad to Spanish rules.

The bulk of the squad are Spaniards and experienced midfielder Marti Riverola, whose career at Barca never took off but has had spells in Italy, will lead the team.

Sarabia is expected to return to Barcelona in search of players unlikely to get a game at Camp Nou, such as Riqui Puig, whom the FC Andorra manager has openly praised.

FC Andorra could also benefit if Pique's dream of establishing a stable of clubs at Kosmos is realised. So far, the Kosmos portfolio includes a deal to expand the Davis Cup with the International Tennis Federation and Spanish TV rights to France's Ligue 1 but a reported deal to buy English lower league club Notts County in 2019 did not materialise.

Since then, Pique and Kosmos have succeeded in taking FC Andorra to unprecedented heights. FC Andorra's debut comes on August 15 away to Real Oviedo and Sarabia's side have two more away games before welcoming Granada to their home stadium. The game is ostensibly the biggest club match in Andorran history but there will – for a season at least – be plenty more to come.

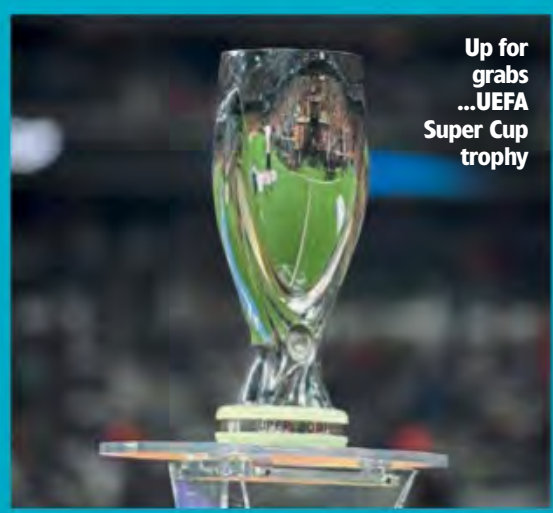
AUGUST 5-SEPTEMBER 5

Global diary

Games, dates and tournaments to pencil in for the month ahead

UEFA Super Cup

This season's European Super Cup takes place in Helsinki's Olympic Stadium between Champions League winners Real Madrid and Europa League victors Eintracht Frankfurt. Remarkably, it is the first meeting between the two sides since the 1960 European Cup final, when Alfredo Di Stefano and Ferenc Puskas each scored hat-tricks on the way to a 7-3 victory and Madrid's fifth successive win in the competition. The final will be the penultimate of its kind, with UEFA planning to introduce a four-team format for 2024.



Up for grabs ...UEFA Super Cup trophy

English derby days

Last season's Premier League runners-up Liverpool are among the teams to be diving straight into the deep end at the start of the new season, facing their biggest rivals Manchester United (August 22) and Everton (September 3) in the space of two weeks. Tottenham Hotspur also have an intense opening month, with trips to Chelsea (August 14) and West Ham United (August 31), while West London rivals Brentford and Fulham meet in the Premier League for the first time on August 20.

Copas Libertadores & Sudamericana

South America's premium club competition is inching towards crunch time. The quarter-finals of both tournaments wrap up between August 9 and August 11, with the semis beginning at the turn of the month. The likeliest destination for both trophies is Brazil, with nine of the 16 teams remaining in the last eight from the continent's biggest nation – Athletico Paranaense, Atletico Mineiro, Corinthians, Flamengo and Palmeiras in the Libertadores, and Atletico Goianiense, Ceara, Internacional and Sao Paulo in the Sudamericana.

Women's World Cup qualifiers

The final round of European qualifying matches for Australia & New Zealand 2023 takes place from September 1 to September 6. Sweden, Spain, Denmark and France have already qualified, and group leaders Netherlands, England, Norway, Italy and Germany will expect to join them. The nine runners-up qualify for the play-offs taking place the following month.

The big kick-off

The Premier League, Bundesliga and Ligue 1 all begin on the first Friday of August. For the second year in a row Arsenal kick things off with a London derby, this year against Crystal Palace; last year they lost at Brentford in the first game. In Germany, Europa League winners Eintracht Frankfurt host Bundesliga champions Bayern Munich, while Lyon and Ajaccio face each other in France's first top-flight match of 2022-23. The Portuguese, Dutch and Turkish top flights also begin the same weekend, with Spain and Italy beginning a week later with Osasuna v Sevilla, and Milan v Udinese and Sampdoria v Atalanta, respectively. For a full set of fixtures, turn over to page 84.

Champions League, Europa League & Europa Conference League draws

The final line-ups for Europe's major club competitions will be settled by mid-to-late August, with the group stage draw for the Champions League taking place on August 25 and the other two a day later. The action itself kicks off the week commencing September 5.

AFC Champions League

The last 16 in the eastern zone of the competition begins on August 18, with an all-Japanese clash between Andres Iniesta's Vissel Kobe and J.League runners-up Yokohama F. Marinos the standout tie of the one-legged games.

Asian Champions League... Iniesta

Decisive... Olivier Giroud made the difference in last season's Milan derby

Top-of-the-table clashes

In Portugal, Italy and Scotland last season's top two face early meetings. On the weekend of August 20-21, Defending Portuguese champions Porto host Sporting, with both sides keen to lay down early markers after busy summers. Then, on September 3, arch-rivals Milan and Internazionale meet at the San Siro. With the gap between the two sides just two points last season, the meeting could already prove to be decisive. On the same day, Scottish giants Celtic and Rangers meet for the first time this season at Parkhead.

PREMIER LEAGUE FIXTURES 2022-23

AUGUST 5
Crystal Palace v Arsenal

AUGUST 6
Fulham v Liverpool
Bournemouth v Aston Villa
Leeds United v Wolves
Newcastle United v Nottingham Forest
Tottenham Hotspur v Southampton
Everton v Chelsea

AUGUST 7
Leicester City v Brentford
Manchester United v Brighton
West Ham United v Manchester City

AUGUST 13
Arsenal v Leicester City
Aston Villa v Everton
Brentford v Manchester United
Brighton v Newcastle United
Chelsea v Tottenham Hotspur
Liverpool v Crystal Palace
Manchester City v Bournemouth
Nottingham Forest v West Ham United
Southampton v Leeds United
Wolves v Fulham

AUGUST 20
Bournemouth v Arsenal
Crystal Palace v Aston Villa
Everton v Nottingham Forest
Fulham v Brentford
Leeds United v Chelsea
Leicester City v Southampton
Manchester United v Liverpool
Newcastle United v Manchester City
Tottenham Hotspur v Wolves
West Ham United v Brighton

AUGUST 27
Arsenal v Fulham
Aston Villa v West Ham United
Brentford v Everton
Brighton v Leeds United
Chelsea v Leicester City
Liverpool v Bournemouth
Manchester City v Crystal Palace
Nottingham Forest v Tottenham Hotspur
Southampton v Manchester United
Wolves v Newcastle United

AUGUST 30
Crystal Palace v Brentford
Fulham v Brighton
Southampton v Chelsea
Leeds United v Everton

AUGUST 31
Arsenal v Aston Villa
Bournemouth v Wolves
Leicester City v Manchester United
Liverpool v Newcastle United
Manchester City v Nottingham Forest
West Ham United v Tottenham Hotspur

SEPTEMBER 3
Aston Villa v Manchester City
Brentford v Leeds United
Brighton v Leicester City
Chelsea v West Ham United
Everton v Liverpool
Manchester United v Arsenal
Newcastle United v Crystal Palace
Nottingham Forest v Bournemouth
Tottenham Hotspur v Fulham
Wolves v Southampton

SEPTEMBER 10
Arsenal v Everton
Bournemouth v Brighton
Crystal Palace v Manchester United
Fulham v Chelsea
Leeds United v Nottingham Forest
Leicester City v Aston Villa
Liverpool v Wolves
Manchester City v Tottenham Hotspur
Southampton v Brentford
West Ham United v Newcastle United

SEPTEMBER 17
Aston Villa v Southampton
Brentford v Arsenal
Brighton v Crystal Palace
Chelsea v Liverpool
Everton v West Ham United
Manchester United v Leeds United
Newcastle United v Bournemouth
Nottingham Forest v Fulham
Tottenham Hotspur v Leicester City
Wolves v Manchester City

OCTOBER 1
Arsenal v Tottenham Hotspur
Bournemouth v Brentford
Crystal Palace v Chelsea
Fulham v Newcastle United
Leeds United v Aston Villa
Leicester City v Nottingham Forest
Liverpool v Brighton
Manchester City v Manchester United
Southampton v Everton
West Ham United v Wolves

OCTOBER 8
Arsenal v Liverpool
Bournemouth v Leicester City
Brighton v Tottenham Hotspur
Chelsea v Wolves
Crystal Palace v Leeds United
Everton v Manchester United
Manchester City v Southampton
Newcastle United v Brentford
Nottingham Forest v Aston Villa
West Ham United v Fulham

OCTOBER 15
Aston Villa v Chelsea
Brentford v Brighton
Fulham v Bournemouth
Leeds United v Arsenal

All claret clash... Aston Villa play West Ham at the end of August

Leicester City v Crystal Palace
Liverpool v Manchester City
Manchester United v Newcastle United
Southampton v West Ham United
Tottenham Hotspur v Everton
Wolves v Nottingham Forest

OCTOBER 18
Arsenal v Manchester City
Bournemouth v Southampton
Brentford v Chelsea
Brighton v Nottingham Forest
Fulham v Aston Villa
Leicester City v Leeds United
Crystal Palace v Wolves

OCTOBER 19
Newcastle United v Everton
Liverpool v West Ham United
Manchester United v Tottenham Hotspur

OCTOBER 22
Aston Villa v Brentford
Chelsea v Manchester United
Everton v Crystal Palace
Leeds United v Fulham
Manchester City v Brighton
Nottingham Forest v Liverpool
Southampton v Arsenal
Tottenham Hotspur v Newcastle United
West Ham United v Bournemouth
Wolves v Leicester City

OCTOBER 29
Arsenal v Nottingham Forest
Bournemouth v Tottenham Hotspur
Brentford v Wolves
Brighton v Chelsea
Crystal Palace v Southampton
Fulham v Everton
Leicester City v Manchester City
Liverpool v Leeds United
Manchester United v West Ham United
Newcastle United v Aston Villa

NOVEMBER 5
Aston Villa v Manchester United
Chelsea v Arsenal
Everton v Leicester City
Leeds United v Bournemouth
Manchester City v Fulham
Nottingham Forest v Brentford
Southampton v Newcastle United
Tottenham Hotspur v Liverpool
West Ham United v Crystal Palace
Wolves v Brighton

NOVEMBER 12
Bournemouth v Everton
Brighton v Aston Villa
Fulham v Manchester United
Liverpool v Southampton
Manchester City v Brentford
Newcastle United v Chelsea
Nottingham Forest v Crystal Palace
Tottenham Hotspur v Leeds United
West Ham United v Leicester City
Wolves v Arsenal

DECEMBER 26
Arsenal v West Ham United
Aston Villa v Liverpool
Brentford v Tottenham Hotspur
Chelsea v Bournemouth
Crystal Palace v Fulham
Everton v Wolves
Leeds United v Manchester City
Leicester City v Newcastle United
Manchester United v Nottingham Forest
Southampton v Brighton

DECEMBER 31
Bournemouth v Crystal Palace
Brighton v Arsenal
Fulham v Southampton
Liverpool v Leicester City
Manchester City v Everton
Newcastle United v Leeds United
Nottingham Forest v Chelsea
Tottenham Hotspur v Aston Villa
West Ham United v Brentford
Wolves v Manchester United

JANUARY 2
Arsenal v Newcastle United
Aston Villa v Wolves
Brentford v Liverpool
Chelsea v Manchester City

North London derby... Arsenal host arch rivals Tottenham in October

Crystal Palace v Tottenham Hotspur
Everton v Brighton
Leeds United v West Ham United
Leicester City v Fulham
Manchester United v Bournemouth
Southampton v Nottingham Forest

JANUARY 14

Aston Villa v Leeds United
Brentford v Bournemouth
Brighton v Liverpool
Chelsea v Crystal Palace
Everton v Southampton
Manchester United v Manchester City
Newcastle United v Fulham
Nottingham Forest v Leicester City
Tottenham Hotspur v Arsenal
Wolves v West Ham United

JANUARY 21

Arsenal v Manchester United
Bournemouth v Nottingham Forest
Crystal Palace v Newcastle United
Fulham v Tottenham Hotspur
Leeds United v Brentford
Leicester City v Brighton
Liverpool v Chelsea
Manchester City v Wolves
Southampton v Aston Villa
West Ham United v Everton

FEBRUARY 4

Aston Villa v Leicester City
Brentford v Southampton
Brighton v Bournemouth
Chelsea v Fulham
Everton v Arsenal
Manchester United v Crystal Palace
Newcastle United v West Ham United
Nottingham Forest v Leeds United
Tottenham Hotspur v Manchester City
Wolves v Liverpool

FEBRUARY 11

Arsenal v Brentford
Bournemouth v Newcastle United
Crystal Palace v Brighton
Fulham v Nottingham Forest
Leeds United v Manchester United
Leicester City v Tottenham Hotspur
Liverpool v Everton
Manchester City v Aston Villa
Southampton v Wolves
West Ham United v Chelsea

FEBRUARY 18

Aston Villa v Arsenal
Brentford v Crystal Palace
Brighton v Fulham
Chelsea v Southampton
Everton v Leeds United
Manchester United v Leicester City
Newcastle United v Liverpool
Nottingham Forest v Manchester City
Tottenham Hotspur v West Ham United
Wolves v Bournemouth

FEBRUARY 25

Bournemouth v Manchester City
Crystal Palace v Liverpool
Everton v Aston Villa
Fulham v Wolves
Leeds United v Southampton
Leicester City v Arsenal
Manchester United v Brentford
Newcastle United v Brighton
Tottenham Hotspur v Chelsea
West Ham United v Nottingham Forest

MARCH 4

Arsenal v Bournemouth
Aston Villa v Crystal Palace
Brentford v Fulham
Brighton v West Ham United
Chelsea v Leeds United
Liverpool v Manchester United
Manchester City v Newcastle United
Nottingham Forest v Everton
Southampton v Leicester City
Wolves v Tottenham Hotspur

MARCH 11

Bournemouth v Liverpool
Crystal Palace v Manchester City
Everton v Brentford
Fulham v Arsenal
Leeds United v Brighton
Leicester City v Chelsea
Manchester United v Southampton
Newcastle United v Wolves
Tottenham Hotspur v Nottingham Forest
West Ham United v Aston Villa

MARCH 18

Arsenal v Crystal Palace
Aston Villa v Bournemouth
Brentford v Leicester City
Brighton v Manchester United
Chelsea v Everton
Liverpool v Fulham
Manchester City v West Ham United
Nottingham Forest v Newcastle United
Southampton v Tottenham Hotspur
Wolves v Leeds United

APRIL 1

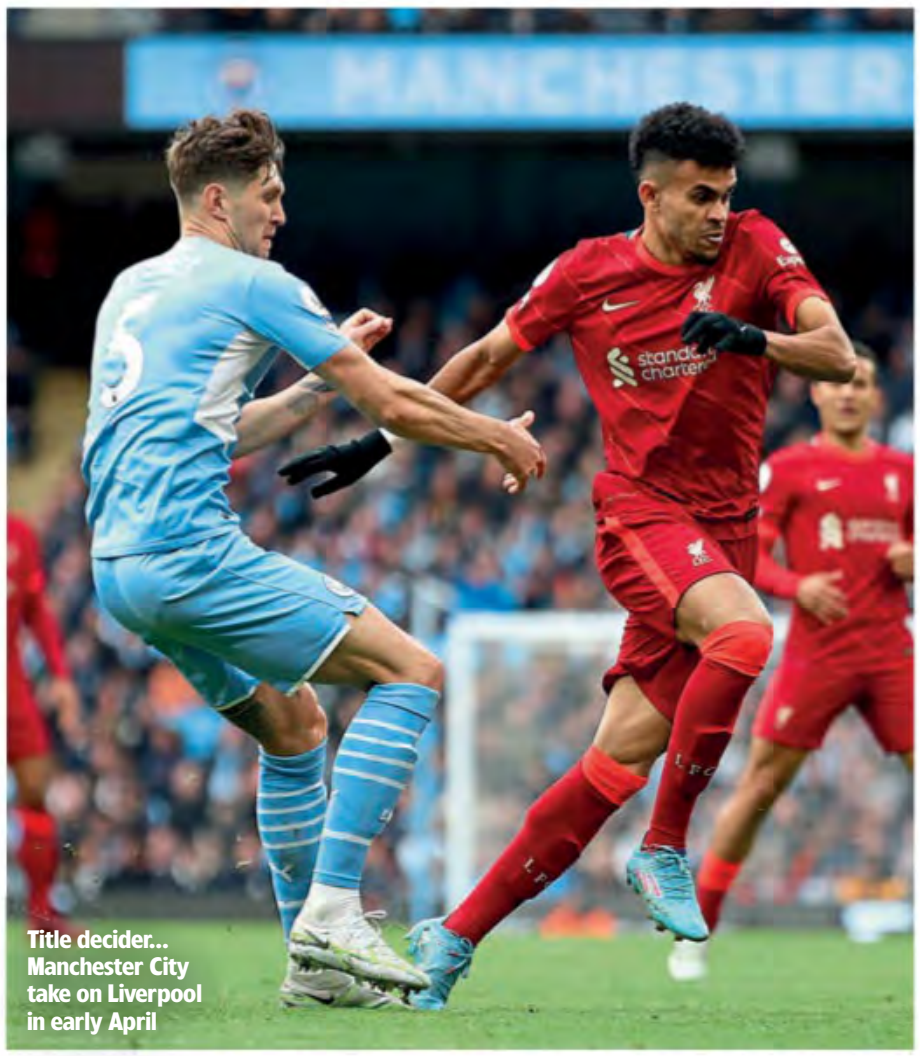
Arsenal v Leeds United
Bournemouth v Fulham
Brighton v Brentford
Chelsea v Aston Villa
Crystal Palace v Leicester City
Everton v Tottenham Hotspur
Manchester City v Liverpool
Newcastle United v Manchester United
Nottingham Forest v Wolves
West Ham United v Southampton

APRIL 8

Aston Villa v Nottingham Forest
Brentford v Newcastle United
Fulham v West Ham United
Leeds United v Crystal Palace
Leicester City v Bournemouth
Liverpool v Arsenal
Manchester United v Everton
Southampton v Manchester City
Tottenham Hotspur v Brighton
Wolves v Chelsea

APRIL 15

Aston Villa v Newcastle United
Chelsea v Brighton
Everton v Fulham
Leeds United v Liverpool
Manchester City v Leicester City
Nottingham Forest v Manchester United
Southampton v Crystal Palace
Tottenham Hotspur v Bournemouth



Title decider... Manchester City take on Liverpool in early April

West Ham United v Arsenal
Wolves v Brentford

APRIL 22

Arsenal v Southampton
Bournemouth v West Ham United
Brentford v Aston Villa
Brighton v Manchester City
Crystal Palace v Everton
Fulham v Leeds United
Leicester City v Wolves
Liverpool v Nottingham Forest
Manchester United v Chelsea
Newcastle United v Tottenham Hotspur

APRIL 25

Everton v Newcastle United
Leeds United v Leicester City
Nottingham Forest v Brighton
Tottenham Hotspur v Manchester United
West Ham United v Liverpool
Wolves v Crystal Palace
Aston Villa v Fulham

APRIL 26

Chelsea v Brentford
Southampton v Bournemouth
Manchester City v Arsenal

APRIL 29

Arsenal v Chelsea
Bournemouth v Leeds United
Brentford v Nottingham Forest
Brighton v Wolves
Crystal Palace v West Ham United
Fulham v Manchester City
Leicester City v Everton
Liverpool v Tottenham Hotspur
Manchester United v Aston Villa
Newcastle United v Southampton

MAY 6

Bournemouth v Chelsea
Brighton v Everton
Fulham v Leicester City
Liverpool v Brentford
Manchester City v Leeds United
Newcastle United v Arsenal
Nottingham Forest v Southampton
Tottenham Hotspur v Crystal Palace
West Ham United v Manchester United
Wolves v Aston Villa

MAY 13

Arsenal v Brighton
Aston Villa v Tottenham Hotspur
Brentford v West Ham United
Chelsea v Nottingham Forest
Crystal Palace v Bournemouth
Everton v Manchester City
Leeds United v Newcastle United
Leicester City v Liverpool
Manchester United v Wolves
Southampton v Fulham

MAY 20

Bournemouth v Manchester United
Brighton v Southampton
Fulham v Crystal Palace
Liverpool v Aston Villa
Manchester City v Chelsea
Newcastle United v Leicester City
Nottingham Forest v Arsenal
Tottenham Hotspur v Brentford
West Ham United v Leeds United
Wolves v Everton

MAY 28

Arsenal v Wolves
Aston Villa v Brighton
Brentford v Manchester City
Chelsea v Newcastle United
Crystal Palace v Nottingham Forest
Everton v Bournemouth
Leeds United v Tottenham Hotspur
Leicester City v West Ham United
Manchester United v Fulham
Southampton v Liverpool

• Fixtures are for the weekend commencing rather than the exact date of the games and are subject to change

LIGUE 1 FIXTURES 2022-23

AUGUST 7
Angers v Nantes
Clermont v Paris Saint-Germain
Lens v Brest
Lille v Auxerre
Lyon v Ajaccio
Marseille v Reims
Montpellier v Troyes
Rennes v Lorient
Strasbourg v Monaco
Toulouse v Nice

AUGUST 14
Ajaccio v Lens
Auxerre v Angers
Brest v Marseille
Lorient v Lyon
Monaco v Rennes
Nantes v Lille
Nice v Strasbourg
Paris Saint-Germain v Montpellier
Reims v Clermont
Troyes v Toulouse

AUGUST 21
Angers v Brest
Clermont v Nice
Lille v Paris Saint-Germain
Lyon v Troyes
Marseille v Nantes
Monaco v Lens
Montpellier v Auxerre
Rennes v Ajaccio
Strasbourg v Reims
Toulouse v Lorient

AUGUST 28
Ajaccio v Lille
Auxerre v Strasbourg
Brest v Montpellier
Lens v Rennes
Lorient v Clermont
Nantes v Toulouse
Nice v Marseille
Paris Saint-Germain v Monaco
Reims v Lyon
Troyes v Angers

AUGUST 31
Angers v Reims
Lens v Lorient
Lille v Nice
Lyon v Auxerre
Marseille v Clermont
Monaco v Troyes
Montpellier v Ajaccio
Rennes v Brest
Strasbourg v Nantes
Toulouse v Paris Saint-Germain

SEPTEMBER 4
Ajaccio v Lorient
Auxerre v Marseille
Brest v Strasbourg
Clermont v Toulouse
Lyon v Angers
Montpellier v Lille
Nantes v Paris Saint-Germain
Nice v Monaco
Reims v Lens
Troyes v Rennes

SEPTEMBER 11
Ajaccio v Nice
Angers v Montpellier
Lens v Troyes
Lorient v Nantes
Marseille v Lille
Monaco v Lyon
Paris Saint-Germain v Brest
Rennes v Auxerre
Strasbourg v Clermont
Toulouse v Reims

SEPTEMBER 18
Auxerre v Lorient
Brest v Ajaccio
Clermont v Troyes

Aerial clash... Strasbourg v Marseille

Lille v Toulouse
Lyon v Paris Saint-Germain
Marseille v Rennes
Montpellier v Strasbourg
Nantes v Lens
Nice v Angers
Reims v Monaco

OCTOBER 2
Ajaccio v Clermont
Angers v Marseille
Auxerre v Brest
Lens v Lyon
Lorient v Lille
Monaco v Nantes
Paris Saint-Germain v Nice
Strasbourg v Rennes
Toulouse v Montpellier
Troyes v Reims

OCTOBER 9
Angers v Strasbourg
Brest v Lorient
Clermont v Auxerre
Lille v Lens
Lyon v Toulouse
Marseille v Ajaccio
Montpellier v Monaco
Nice v Troyes
Reims v Paris Saint-Germain
Rennes v Nantes

OCTOBER 16
Auxerre v Nice
Lens v Montpellier
Lorient v Reims
Monaco v Clermont
Nantes v Brest
Paris Saint-Germain v Marseille
Rennes v Lyon
Strasbourg v Lille
Toulouse v Angers
Troyes v Ajaccio

OCTOBER 23
Ajaccio v Paris Saint-Germain
Angers v Rennes
Clermont v Brest
Lille v Monaco
Marseille v Lens
Montpellier v Lyon
Nice v Nantes
Reims v Auxerre
Toulouse v Strasbourg
Troyes v Lorient

OCTOBER 30
Auxerre v Ajaccio
Brest v Reims
Lens v Toulouse
Lorient v Nice
Lyon v Lille
Monaco v Angers
Nantes v Clermont
Paris Saint-Germain v Troyes
Rennes v Montpellier
Strasbourg v Marseille

NOVEMBER 6
Ajaccio v Strasbourg
Angers v Lens
Clermont v Montpellier
Lille v Rennes
Lorient v Paris Saint-Germain
Marseille v Lyon
Nice v Brest
Reims v Nantes
Toulouse v Monaco
Troyes v Auxerre

NOVEMBER 13
Brest v Troyes
Lens v Clermont
Lille v Angers
Lyon v Nice
Monaco v Marseille
Montpellier v Reims
Nantes v Ajaccio
Paris Saint-Germain v Auxerre
Rennes v Toulouse
Strasbourg v Lorient

DECEMBER 28
Ajaccio v Angers
Auxerre v Monaco
Brest v Lyon
Clermont v Lille
Lorient v Montpellier
Marseille v Toulouse
Nice v Lens
Paris Saint-Germain v Strasbourg
Reims v Rennes
Troyes v Nantes

JANUARY 1
Angers v Lorient
Lens v Paris Saint-Germain
Lille v Reims
Lyon v Clermont
Monaco v Brest
Montpellier v Marseille
Nantes v Auxerre
Rennes v Nice
Strasbourg v Troyes
Toulouse v Ajaccio

JANUARY 11
Ajaccio v Reims
Auxerre v Toulouse
Brest v Lille
Clermont v Rennes
Lorient v Monaco
Nantes v Lyon
Nice v Montpellier
Paris Saint-Germain v Angers
Strasbourg v Lens
Troyes v Marseille

JANUARY 15
Angers v Clermont
Lens v Auxerre
Lille v Troyes
Lyon v Strasbourg
Marseille v Lorient
Monaco v Ajaccio

Title rivals...PSG and Monaco

Montpellier v Nantes
Reims v Nice
Rennes v Paris Saint-Germain
Toulouse v Brest

JANUARY 29

Ajaccio v Lyon
Auxerre v Montpellier
Brest v Angers
Clermont v Nantes
Lorient v Rennes
Marseille v Monaco
Nice v Lille
Paris Saint-Germain v Reims
Strasbourg v Toulouse
Troyes v Lens

FEBRUARY 1

Angers v Ajaccio
Lens v Nice
Lille v Clermont
Lyon v Brest
Monaco v Auxerre
Montpellier v Paris Saint-Germain
Nantes v Marseille
Reims v Lorient
Rennes v Strasbourg
Toulouse v Troyes

FEBRUARY 5

Ajaccio v Nantes
Auxerre v Reims
Brest v Lens
Clermont v Monaco
Lorient v Angers
Marseille v Nice
Paris Saint-Germain v Toulouse
Rennes v Lille
Strasbourg v Montpellier
Troyes v Lyon

FEBRUARY 12

Angers v Auxerre
Clermont v Marseille
Lille v Strasbourg
Lyon v Lens
Monaco v Paris Saint-Germain
Montpellier v Brest
Nantes v Lorient
Nice v Ajaccio
Reims v Troyes
Toulouse v Rennes

FEBRUARY 19

Auxerre v Lyon
Brest v Monaco
Lens v Nantes
Lorient v Ajaccio
Nice v Reims
Paris Saint-Germain v Lille
Rennes v Clermont
Strasbourg v Angers
Toulouse v Marseille
Troyes v Montpellier

FEBRUARY 26

Ajaccio v Troyes
Angers v Lyon
Clermont v Strasbourg
Lille v Brest
Lorient v Auxerre
Marseille v Paris Saint-Germain
Monaco v Nice
Montpellier v Lens
Nantes v Rennes
Reims v Toulouse

MARCH 5

Lens v Lille
Lyon v Lorient
Montpellier v Angers
Nice v Auxerre
Paris Saint-Germain v Nantes
Reims v Ajaccio
Rennes v Marseille
Strasbourg v Brest

Last season's Cup finalists... Nantes and Nice

Toulouse v Clermont
Troyes v Monaco

MARCH 12

Ajaccio v Montpellier
Angers v Toulouse
Auxerre v Rennes
Brest v Paris Saint-Germain
Clermont v Lens
Lille v Lyon
Lorient v Troyes
Marseille v Strasbourg
Monaco v Reims
Nantes v Nice

MARCH 19

Ajaccio v Monaco
Lens v Angers
Lyon v Nantes
Montpellier v Clermont
Nice v Lorient
Paris Saint-Germain v Rennes
Reims v Marseille
Strasbourg v Auxerre
Toulouse v Lille
Troyes v Brest

APRIL 2

Angers v Nice
Auxerre v Troyes
Brest v Toulouse
Clermont v Ajaccio
Lille v Lorient
Marseille v Montpellier
Monaco v Strasbourg
Nantes v Reims
Paris Saint-Germain v Lyon
Rennes v Lens

APRIL 9

Ajaccio v Auxerre
Angers v Lille
Lens v Strasbourg
Lorient v Marseille
Lyon v Rennes
Montpellier v Toulouse
Nantes v Monaco
Nice v Paris Saint-Germain
Reims v Brest
Troyes v Clermont

APRIL 16

Auxerre v Nantes
Brest v Nice
Clermont v Angers
Lille v Montpellier
Marseille v Troyes
Monaco v Lorient
Paris Saint-Germain v Lens
Rennes v Reims
Strasbourg v Ajaccio
Toulouse v Lyon

APRIL 23

Ajaccio v Brest
Angers v Paris Saint-Germain
Auxerre v Lille
Lens v Monaco
Lorient v Toulouse
Lyon v Marseille
Montpellier v Rennes
Nantes v Troyes
Nice v Clermont
Reims v Strasbourg

APRIL 30

Brest v Nantes
Clermont v Reims
Lille v Ajaccio
Marseille v Auxerre
Monaco v Montpellier
Paris Saint-Germain v Lorient
Rennes v Angers
Strasbourg v Lyon
Toulouse v Lens
Troyes v Nice

MAY 7

Ajaccio v Toulouse
Angers v Monaco
Auxerre v Clermont
Lens v Marseille
Lorient v Brest
Lyon v Montpellier
Nantes v Strasbourg
Nice v Rennes
Reims v Lille
Troyes v Paris Saint-Germain

MAY 14

Brest v Auxerre
Clermont v Lyon
Lens v Reims
Marseille v Angers
Monaco v Lille
Montpellier v Lorient
Paris Saint-Germain v Ajaccio
Rennes v Troyes
Strasbourg v Nice
Toulouse v Nantes

MAY 21

Ajaccio v Rennes
Auxerre v Paris Saint-Germain
Brest v Clermont
Lille v Marseille
Lorient v Lens
Lyon v Monaco
Nantes v Montpellier
Nice v Toulouse
Reims v Angers
Troyes v Strasbourg

MAY 27

Angers v Troyes
Clermont v Lorient
Lens v Ajaccio
Lille v Nantes
Lyon v Reims
Marseille v Brest
Montpellier v Nice
Rennes v Monaco
Strasbourg v Paris Saint-Germain
Toulouse v Auxerre

JUNE 3

Ajaccio v Marseille
Auxerre v Lens
Brest v Rennes
Lorient v Strasbourg
Monaco v Toulouse
Nantes v Angers
Nice v Lyon
Paris Saint-Germain v Clermont
Reims v Montpellier
Troyes v Lille

•Fixtures are for the weekend commencing rather than the exact date of the games and are subject to change

BUNDESLIGA FIXTURES 2022-23

AUGUST 5
Eintracht Frankfurt v Bayern Munich

AUGUST 6
Augsburg v Freiburg
Bochum v Mainz
Borussia Dortmund v Bayer Leverkusen
Borussia M'gladbach v Hoffenheim
Cologne v Schalke
Stuttgart v RB Leipzig
Union Berlin v Hertha Berlin
Wolfsburg v Werder Bremen

AUGUST 13
Bayer Leverkusen v Augsburg
Bayern Munich v Wolfsburg
Freiburg v Borussia Dortmund
Hertha Berlin v Eintracht Frankfurt
Hoffenheim v Bochum
Mainz v Union Berlin
RB Leipzig v Cologne
Schalke v Borussia M'gladbach
Werder Bremen v Stuttgart

AUGUST 20
Augsburg v Mainz
Bayer Leverkusen v Hoffenheim
Bochum v Bayern Munich
Borussia Dortmund v Werder Bremen
Borussia M'gladbach v Hertha Berlin
Eintracht Frankfurt v Cologne
Stuttgart v Freiburg
Union Berlin v RB Leipzig
Wolfsburg v Schalke

AUGUST 27
Bayern Munich v Borussia M'gladbach
Cologne v Stuttgart
Freiburg v Bochum
Hertha Berlin v Borussia Dortmund
Hoffenheim v Augsburg
Mainz v Bayer Leverkusen
RB Leipzig v Wolfsburg
Schalke v Union Berlin
Werder Bremen v Eintracht Frankfurt

SEPTEMBER 3
Augsburg v Hertha Berlin
Bayer Leverkusen v Freiburg
Bochum v Werder Bremen
Borussia Dortmund v Hoffenheim
Borussia M'gladbach v Mainz
Eintracht Frankfurt v RB Leipzig
Stuttgart v Schalke
Union Berlin v Bayern Munich
Wolfsburg v Cologne

SEPTEMBER 10
Bayern Munich v Stuttgart
Cologne v Union Berlin
Eintracht Frankfurt v Wolfsburg
Freiburg v Borussia M'gladbach
Hertha Berlin v Bayer Leverkusen
Hoffenheim v Mainz
RB Leipzig v Borussia Dortmund
Schalke v Bochum
Werder Bremen v Augsburg

SEPTEMBER 17
Augsburg v Bayern Munich
Bayer Leverkusen v Werder Bremen
Bochum v Cologne
Borussia Dortmund v Schalke
Borussia M'gladbach v RB Leipzig
Hoffenheim v Freiburg
Mainz v Hertha Berlin
Stuttgart v Eintracht Frankfurt
Union Berlin v Wolfsburg

OCTOBER 1
Bayern Munich v Bayer Leverkusen
Cologne v Borussia Dortmund
Eintracht Frankfurt v Union Berlin
Freiburg v Mainz
Hertha Berlin v Hoffenheim
RB Leipzig v Bochum
Schalke v Augsburg
Werder Bremen v Borussia M'gladbach
Wolfsburg v Stuttgart

OCTOBER 8
Augsburg v Wolfsburg
Bayer Leverkusen v Schalke
Bochum v Eintracht Frankfurt
Borussia Dortmund v Bayern Munich
Borussia M'gladbach v Cologne
Hertha Berlin v Freiburg
Hoffenheim v Werder Bremen
Mainz v RB Leipzig
Stuttgart v Union Berlin

OCTOBER 15
Bayern Munich v Freiburg
Cologne v Augsburg
Eintracht Frankfurt v Bayer Leverkusen
RB Leipzig v Hertha Berlin
Schalke v Hoffenheim
Stuttgart v Bochum

Surprise packages... Cologne travel to Freiburg in November

Union Berlin v Borussia Dortmund
Werder Bremen v Mainz
Wolfsburg v Borussia M'gladbach

OCTOBER 22
Augsburg v RB Leipzig
Bayer Leverkusen v Wolfsburg
Bochum v Union Berlin
Borussia Dortmund v Stuttgart
Borussia M'gladbach v Eintracht Frankfurt
Freiburg v Werder Bremen
Hertha Berlin v Schalke
Hoffenheim v Bayern Munich
Mainz v Cologne

OCTOBER 29
Bayern Munich v Mainz
Cologne v Hoffenheim
Eintracht Frankfurt v Borussia Dortmund
RB Leipzig v Bayer Leverkusen
Schalke v Freiburg
Stuttgart v Augsburg
Union Berlin v Borussia M'gladbach
Werder Bremen v Hertha Berlin
Wolfsburg v Bochum

NOVEMBER 5
Augsburg v Eintracht Frankfurt
Bayer Leverkusen v Union Berlin
Borussia Dortmund v Bochum
Borussia M'gladbach v Stuttgart
Freiburg v Cologne
Hertha Berlin v Bayern Munich
Hoffenheim v RB Leipzig
Mainz v Wolfsburg
Werder Bremen v Schalke

NOVEMBER 8
Bayern Munich v Werder Bremen
Bochum v Borussia M'gladbach
Cologne v Bayer Leverkusen
Eintracht Frankfurt v Hoffenheim
RB Leipzig v Freiburg
Schalke v Mainz
Stuttgart v Hertha Berlin
Union Berlin v Augsburg
Wolfsburg v Borussia Dortmund

NOVEMBER 12
Augsburg v Bochum
Bayer Leverkusen v Stuttgart
Borussia M'gladbach v Borussia Dortmund
Freiburg v Union Berlin
Hertha Berlin v Cologne
Hoffenheim v Wolfsburg
Mainz v Eintracht Frankfurt
Schalke v Bayern Munich
Werder Bremen v RB Leipzig

Berlin derby...Hertha v Union is a headline clash in January

JANUARY 21
Bochum v Hertha Berlin
Borussia Dortmund v Augsburg
Borussia M'gladbach v Bayer Leverkusen
Cologne v Werder Bremen
Eintracht Frankfurt v Schalke
RB Leipzig v Bayern Munich
Stuttgart v Mainz
Union Berlin v Hoffenheim
Wolfsburg v Freiburg

JANUARY 24
Augsburg v Borussia M'gladbach
Bayer Leverkusen v Bochum
Bayern Munich v Cologne
Freiburg v Eintracht Frankfurt
Hertha Berlin v Wolfsburg
Hoffenheim v Stuttgart
Mainz v Borussia Dortmund
Schalke v RB Leipzig
Werder Bremen v Union Berlin

JANUARY 28
Bayer Leverkusen v Borussia Dortmund
Bayern Munich v Eintracht Frankfurt
Freiburg v Augsburg
Hertha Berlin v Union Berlin
Hoffenheim v Borussia M'gladbach
Mainz v Bochum
RB Leipzig v Stuttgart
Schalke v Cologne
Werder Bremen v Wolfsburg

Der Klassiker… **Bayern face off with Dortmund in April**

FEBRUARY 4
Augsburg v Bayer Leverkusen
Bochum v Hoffenheim
Borussia Dortmund v Freiburg
Borussia M'gladbach v Schalke
Cologne v RB Leipzig
Eintracht Frankfurt v Hertha Berlin
Stuttgart v Werder Bremen
Union Berlin v Mainz
Wolfsburg v Bayern Munich

FEBRUARY 11
Bayern Munich v Bochum
Cologne v Eintracht Frankfurt
Freiburg v Stuttgart
Hertha Berlin v Borussia M'gladbach
Hoffenheim v Bayer Leverkusen
Mainz v Augsburg
RB Leipzig v Union Berlin
Schalke v Wolfsburg
Werder Bremen v Borussia Dortmund

FEBRUARY 18
Augsburg v Hoffenheim
Bayer Leverkusen v Mainz
Bochum v Freiburg
Borussia Dortmund v Hertha Berlin
Borussia M'gladbach v Bayern Munich
Eintracht Frankfurt v Werder Bremen
Stuttgart v Cologne
Union Berlin v Schalke
Wolfsburg v RB Leipzig

FEBRUARY 25
Bayern Munich v Union Berlin
Cologne v Wolfsburg
Freiburg v Bayer Leverkusen
Hertha Berlin v Augsburg
Hoffenheim v Borussia Dortmund
Mainz v Borussia M'gladbach
RB Leipzig v Eintracht Frankfurt
Schalke v Stuttgart
Werder Bremen v Bochum

MARCH 4
Augsburg v Werder Bremen
Bayer Leverkusen v Hertha Berlin
Bochum v Schalke
Borussia Dortmund v RB Leipzig
Borussia M'gladbach v Freiburg
Mainz v Hoffenheim
Stuttgart v Bayern Munich
Union Berlin v Cologne
Wolfsburg v Eintracht Frankfurt

MARCH 11
Bayern Munich v Augsburg
Cologne v Bochum
Eintracht Frankfurt v Stuttgart
Freiburg v Hoffenheim
Hertha Berlin v Mainz
RB Leipzig v Borussia M'gladbach
Schalke v Borussia Dortmund
Werder Bremen v Bayer Leverkusen
Wolfsburg v Union Berlin

MARCH 18
Augsburg v Schalke
Bayer Leverkusen v Bayern Munich
Bochum v RB Leipzig
Borussia Dortmund v Cologne
Borussia M'gladbach v Werder Bremen
Hoffenheim v Hertha Berlin
Mainz v Freiburg
Stuttgart v Wolfsburg
Union Berlin v Eintracht Frankfurt

APRIL 1
Bayern Munich v Borussia Dortmund
Cologne v Borussia M'gladbach
Eintracht Frankfurt v Bochum
Freiburg v Hertha Berlin
RB Leipzig v Mainz
Schalke v Bayer Leverkusen
Union Berlin v Stuttgart
Werder Bremen v Hoffenheim
Wolfsburg v Augsburg

APRIL 8
Augsburg v Cologne
Bayer Leverkusen v Eintracht Frankfurt
Bochum v Stuttgart
Borussia Dortmund v Union Berlin
Borussia M'gladbach v Wolfsburg
Freiburg v Bayern Munich
Hertha Berlin v RB Leipzig
Hoffenheim v Schalke
Mainz v Werder Bremen

APRIL 15
Bayern Munich v Hoffenheim
Cologne v Mainz
Eintracht Frankfurt v Borussia M'gladbach
RB Leipzig v Augsburg
Schalke v Hertha Berlin
Stuttgart v Borussia Dortmund
Union Berlin v Bochum
Werder Bremen v Freiburg
Wolfsburg v Bayer Leverkusen

APRIL 22
Augsburg v Stuttgart
Bayer Leverkusen v RB Leipzig
Bochum v Wolfsburg
Borussia Dortmund v Eintracht Frankfurt
Borussia M'gladbach v Union Berlin
Freiburg v Schalke
Hertha Berlin v Werder Bremen
Hoffenheim v Cologne
Mainz v Bayern Munich

APRIL 29
Bayern Munich v Hertha Berlin
Bochum v Borussia Dortmund
Cologne v Freiburg
Eintracht Frankfurt v Augsburg
RB Leipzig v Hoffenheim
Schalke v Werder Bremen
Stuttgart v Borussia M'gladbach
Union Berlin v Bayer Leverkusen
Wolfsburg v Mainz

MAY 6
Augsburg v Union Berlin
Bayer Leverkusen v Cologne
Borussia Dortmund v Wolfsburg
Borussia M'gladbach v Bochum
Freiburg v RB Leipzig
Hertha Berlin v Stuttgart
Hoffenheim v Eintracht Frankfurt
Mainz v Schalke
Werder Bremen v Bayern Munich

MAY 13
Bayern Munich v Schalke
Bochum v Augsburg
Borussia Dortmund v Borussia M'gladbach
Cologne v Hertha Berlin
Eintracht Frankfurt v Mainz
RB Leipzig v Werder Bremen
Stuttgart v Bayer Leverkusen
Union Berlin v Freiburg
Wolfsburg v Hoffenheim

MAY 20
Augsburg v Borussia Dortmund
Bayer Leverkusen v Borussia M'gladbach
Bayern Munich v RB Leipzig
Freiburg v Wolfsburg
Hertha Berlin v Bochum
Hoffenheim v Union Berlin
Mainz v Stuttgart
Schalke v Eintracht Frankfurt
Werder Bremen v Cologne

MAY 27
Bochum v Bayer Leverkusen
Borussia Dortmund v Mainz
Borussia M'gladbach v Augsburg
Cologne v Bayern Munich
Eintracht Frankfurt v Freiburg
RB Leipzig v Schalke
Stuttgart v Hoffenheim
Union Berlin v Werder Bremen
Wolfsburg v Hertha Berlin

• Fixtures are for the weekend commencing rather than the exact date of the games and are subject to change

SERIE A FIXTURES 2022-23

AUGUST 14
Fiorentina v Cremonese
Juventus v Sassuolo
Lazio v Bologna
Lecce v Internazionale
Milan v Udinese
Monza v Torino
Salernitana v Roma
Sampdoria v Atalanta
Spezia v Empoli
Verona v Napoli

AUGUST 21
Atalanta v Milan
Bologna v Verona
Empoli v Fiorentina
Internazionale v Spezia
Napoli v Monza
Roma v Cremonese
Sampdoria v Juventus
Sassuolo v Lecce
Torino v Lazio
Udinese v Salernitana

AUGUST 28
Cremonese v Torino
Fiorentina v Napoli
Juventus v Roma
Lazio v Internazionale
Lecce v Empoli
Milan v Bologna
Monza v Udinese
Salernitana v Sampdoria
Spezia v Sassuolo
Verona v Atalanta

AUGUST 31
Atalanta v Torino
Bologna v Salernitana
Empoli v Verona
Internazionale v Cremonese
Juventus v Spezia
Napoli v Lecce
Roma v Monza
Sampdoria v Lazio
Sassuolo v Milan
Udinese v Fiorentina

SEPTEMBER 4
Cremonese v Sassuolo
Fiorentina v Juventus
Lazio v Napoli
Milan v Internazionale
Monza v Atalanta
Salernitana v Empoli
Spezia v Bologna
Torino v Lecce
Udinese v Roma
Verona v Sampdoria

SEPTEMBER 11
Atalanta v Cremonese
Bologna v Fiorentina
Empoli v Roma
Internazionale v Torino
Juventus v Salernitana
Lazio v Verona
Lecce v Monza
Napoli v Spezia
Sampdoria v Milan
Sassuolo v Udinese

SEPTEMBER 18
Bologna v Empoli
Cremonese v Lazio
Fiorentina v Verona
Milan v Napoli
Monza v Juventus
Roma v Atalanta
Salernitana v Lecce
Spezia v Sampdoria
Torino v Sassuolo
Udinese v Internazionale

OCTOBER 2
Atalanta v Fiorentina
Empoli v Milan
Internazionale v Roma
Juventus v Bologna
Lazio v Spezia
Lecce v Cremonese
Napoli v Torino
Sampdoria v Monza
Sassuolo v Salernitana
Verona v Udinese

OCTOBER 9
Bologna v Sampdoria
Cremonese v Napoli
Fiorentina v Lazio
Milan v Juventus
Monza v Spezia
Roma v Lecce
Salernitana v Verona
Sassuolo v Internazionale
Torino v Empoli
Udinese v Atalanta

OCTOBER 16
Atalanta v Sassuolo
Empoli v Monza
Internazionale v Salernitana
Lazio v Udinese
Lecce v Fiorentina
Napoli v Bologna
Sampdoria v Roma
Spezia v Cremonese
Torino v Juventus
Verona v Milan

OCTOBER 23
Atalanta v Lazio
Bologna v Lecce
Cremonese v Sampdoria
Fiorentina v Internazionale
Juventus v Empoli
Milan v Monza
Roma v Napoli
Salernitana v Spezia
Sassuolo v Verona
Udinese v Torino

OCTOBER 30
Cremonese v Udinese
Empoli v Atalanta
Internazionale v Sampdoria
Lazio v Salernitana
Lecce v Juventus
Monza v Bologna
Napoli v Sassuolo
Spezia v Fiorentina
Torino v Milan
Verona v Roma

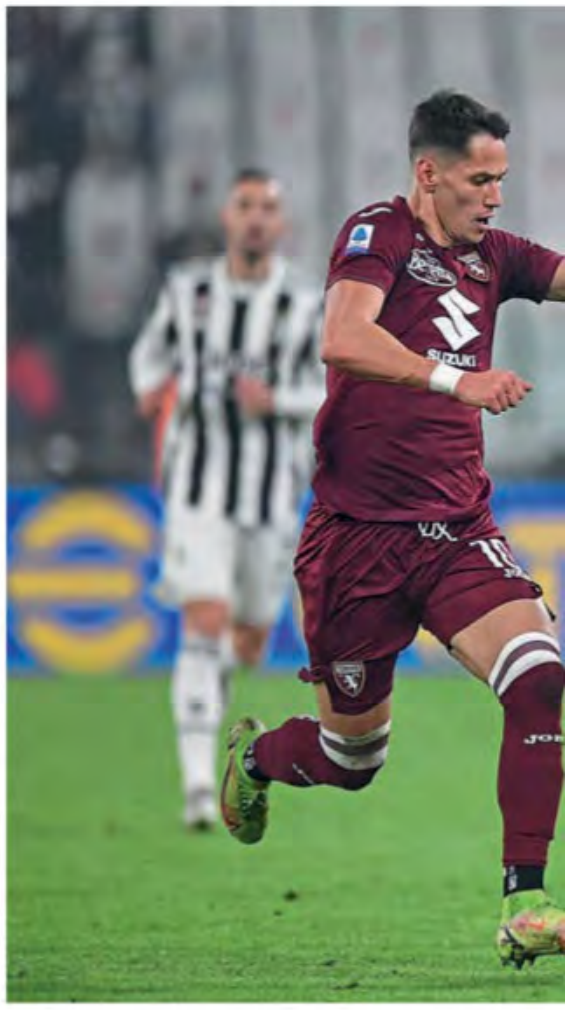
NOVEMBER 6
Atalanta v Napoli
Bologna v Torino
Empoli v Sassuolo
Juventus v Internazionale
Milan v Spezia
Monza v Verona
Roma v Lazio
Salernitana v Cremonese
Sampdoria v Fiorentina
Udinese v Lecce

NOVEMBER 9
Cremonese v Milan
Fiorentina v Salernitana
Internazionale v Bologna
Lazio v Monza
Lecce v Atalanta
Napoli v Empoli
Sassuolo v Roma
Spezia v Udinese
Torino v Sampdoria
Verona v Juventus

NOVEMBER 13
Atalanta v Internazionale
Bologna v Sassuolo
Empoli v Cremonese
Juventus v Lazio
Milan v Fiorentina
Monza v Salernitana
Napoli v Udinese
Roma v Torino
Sampdoria v Lecce
Verona v Spezia

JANUARY 4
Cremonese v Juventus
Fiorentina v Monza
Internazionale v Napoli
Lecce v Lazio
Roma v Bologna
Salernitana v Milan
Sassuolo v Sampdoria
Spezia v Atalanta
Torino v Verona
Udinese v Empoli

JANUARY 8
Bologna v Atalanta
Fiorentina v Sassuolo
Juventus v Udinese
Lazio v Empoli
Milan v Roma
Monza v Internazionale



Salernitana v Torino
Sampdoria v Napoli
Spezia v Lecce
Verona v Cremonese

JANUARY 15
Atalanta v Salernitana
Cremonese v Monza
Empoli v Sampdoria
Internazionale v Verona
Lecce v Milan
Napoli v Juventus
Roma v Fiorentina
Sassuolo v Lazio
Torino v Spezia
Udinese v Bologna

JANUARY 22
Bologna v Cremonese
Fiorentina v Torino

Derby della Madonnina... **Milan v Inter**

Turin bragging rights...Juventus v Torino takes place in February

Internazionale v Empoli
Juventus v Atalanta
Lazio v Milan
Monza v Sassuolo
Salernitana v Napoli
Sampdoria v Udinese
Spezia v Roma
Verona v Lecce

JANUARY 29

Atalanta v Sampdoria
Bologna v Spezia
Cremonese v Internazionale
Empoli v Torino
Juventus v Monza
Lazio v Fiorentina
Lecce v Salernitana
Milan v Sassuolo
Napoli v Roma
Udinese v Verona

FEBRUARY 5

Cremonese v Lecce
Fiorentina v Bologna
Internazionale v Milan
Monza v Sampdoria
Roma v Empoli
Salernitana v Juventus
Sassuolo v Atalanta
Spezia v Napoli
Torino v Udinese
Verona v Lazio

FEBRUARY 12

Bologna v Monza
Empoli v Spezia
Juventus v Fiorentina
Lazio v Atalanta
Lecce v Roma
Milan v Torino
Napoli v Cremonese
Sampdoria v Internazionale
Udinese v Sassuolo
Verona v Salernitana

FEBRUARY 19

Atalanta v Lecce
Fiorentina v Empoli
Internazionale v Udinese
Monza v Milan
Roma v Verona
Salernitana v Lazio
Sampdoria v Bologna
Sassuolo v Napoli
Spezia v Juventus
Torino v Cremonese

FEBRUARY 26

Bologna v Internazionale
Cremonese v Roma
Empoli v Napoli
Juventus v Torino
Lazio v Sampdoria
Lecce v Sassuolo
Milan v Atalanta
Salernitana v Monza
Udinese v Spezia
Verona v Fiorentina

MARCH 5

Atalanta v Udinese
Fiorentina v Milan
Internazionale v Lecce
Monza v Empoli
Napoli v Lazio
Roma v Juventus
Sampdoria v Salernitana
Sassuolo v Cremonese
Spezia v Verona
Torino v Bologna

MARCH 12

Bologna v Lazio
Cremonese v Fiorentina
Empoli v Udinese
Juventus v Sampdoria
Lecce v Torino
Milan v Salernitana
Napoli v Atalanta
Roma v Sassuolo
Spezia v Internazionale
Verona v Monza

MARCH 19

Atalanta v Empoli
Fiorentina v Lecce
Internazionale v Juventus
Lazio v Roma
Monza v Cremonese
Salernitana v Bologna
Sampdoria v Verona
Sassuolo v Spezia
Torino v Napoli
Udinese v Milan

APRIL 2

Bologna v Udinese
Cremonese v Atalanta
Empoli v Lecce
Internazionale v Fiorentina
Juventus v Verona
Monza v Lazio
Napoli v Milan
Roma v Sampdoria
Sassuolo v Torino
Spezia v Salernitana

APRIL 8

Atalanta v Bologna
Fiorentina v Spezia
Lazio v Juventus
Lecce v Napoli
Milan v Empoli
Salernitana v Internazionale
Sampdoria v Cremonese
Torino v Roma
Udinese v Monza
Verona v Sassuolo

APRIL 16

Bologna v Milan
Cremonese v Empoli
Fiorentina v Atalanta
Internazionale v Monza
Lecce v Sampdoria
Napoli v Verona
Roma v Udinese
Sassuolo v Juventus
Spezia v Lazio
Torino v Salernitana

APRIL 23

Atalanta v Roma
Empoli v Internazionale
Juventus v Napoli
Lazio v Torino
Milan v Lecce
Monza v Fiorentina
Salernitana v Sassuolo
Sampdoria v Spezia
Udinese v Cremonese
Verona v Bologna

APRIL 30

Bologna v Juventus
Cremonese v Verona
Fiorentina v Sampdoria
Internazionale v Lazio
Lecce v Udinese
Napoli v Salernitana
Roma v Milan
Sassuolo v Empoli
Spezia v Monza
Torino v Atalanta

MAY 3

Atalanta v Spezia
Empoli v Bologna
Juventus v Lecce
Lazio v Sassuolo
Milan v Cremonese
Monza v Roma
Salernitana v Fiorentina
Sampdoria v Torino
Udinese v Napoli
Verona v Internazionale

MAY 7

Atalanta v Juventus
Cremonese v Spezia
Empoli v Salernitana
Lecce v Verona
Milan v Lazio
Napoli v Fiorentina
Roma v Internazionale
Sassuolo v Bologna
Torino v Monza
Udinese v Sampdoria

MAY 14

Bologna v Roma
Fiorentina v Udinese
Internazionale v Sassuolo
Juventus v Cremonese
Lazio v Lecce
Monza v Napoli
Salernitana v Atalanta
Sampdoria v Empoli
Spezia v Milan
Verona v Torino

MAY 21

Atalanta v Verona
Cremonese v Bologna
Empoli v Juventus
Lecce v Spezia
Milan v Sampdoria
Napoli v Internazionale
Roma v Salernitana
Sassuolo v Monza
Torino v Fiorentina
Udinese v Lazio

MAY 28

Bologna v Napoli
Fiorentina v Roma
Internazionale v Atalanta
Juventus v Milan
Lazio v Cremonese
Monza v Lecce
Salernitana v Udinese
Sampdoria v Sassuolo
Spezia v Torino
Verona v Empoli

JUNE 4

Atalanta v Monza
Cremonese v Salernitana
Empoli v Lazio
Lecce v Bologna
Milan v Verona
Napoli v Sampdoria
Roma v Spezia
Sassuolo v Fiorentina
Torino v Internazionale
Udinese v Juventus

Derby della Capitale...Lazio against Roma

•Fixtures are for the weekend commencing rather than the exact date of the games and are subject to change

LA LIGA FIXTURES 2022-23

AUGUST 14
Almeria v Real Madrid
Athletic Bilbao v Mallorca
Barcelona v Rayo Vallecano
Cadiz v Real Sociedad
Celta Vigo v Espanyol
Getafe v Atletico Madrid
Osasuna v Sevilla
Real Betis v Elche
Real Valladolid v Villarreal
Valencia v Girona

AUGUST 21
Athletic Bilbao v Valencia
Atletico Madrid v Villarreal
Celta Vigo v Real Madrid
Elche v Almeria
Espanyol v Rayo Vallecano
Girona v Getafe
Mallorca v Real Betis
Osasuna v Cadiz
Real Sociedad v Barcelona
Sevilla v Real Valladolid

AUGUST 28
Almeria v Sevilla
Barcelona v Real Valladolid
Cadiz v Athletic Bilbao
Elche v Real Sociedad
Espanyol v Real Madrid
Getafe v Villarreal
Girona v Celta Vigo
Rayo Vallecano v Mallorca
Real Betis v Osasuna
Valencia v Atletico Madrid

SEPTEMBER 4
Athletic Bilbao v Espanyol
Celta Vigo v Cadiz
Mallorca v Girona
Osasuna v Rayo Vallecano
Real Madrid v Real Betis
Real Sociedad v Atletico Madrid
Real Valladolid v Almeria
Sevilla v Barcelona
Valencia v Getafe
Villarreal v Elche

SEPTEMBER 11
Almeria v Osasuna
Atletico Madrid v Celta Vigo
Cadiz v Barcelona
Elche v Athletic Bilbao
Espanyol v Sevilla
Getafe v Real Sociedad
Girona v Real Valladolid
Rayo Vallecano v Valencia
Real Betis v Villarreal
Real Madrid v Mallorca

SEPTEMBER 18
Athletic Bilbao v Rayo Vallecano
Atletico Madrid v Real Madrid
Barcelona v Elche
Mallorca v Almeria
Osasuna v Getafe
Real Betis v Girona
Real Sociedad v Espanyol
Real Valladolid v Cadiz
Valencia v Celta Vigo
Villarreal v Sevilla

OCTOBER 2
Athletic Bilbao v Almeria
Cadiz v Villarreal
Celta Vigo v Real Betis
Espanyol v Valencia
Getafe v Real Valladolid
Girona v Real Sociedad
Mallorca v Barcelona
Rayo Vallecano v Elche
Real Madrid v Osasuna
Sevilla v Atletico Madrid

OCTOBER 9
Almeria v Rayo Vallecano
Atletico Madrid v Girona
Barcelona v Celta Vigo
Cadiz v Espanyol
Elche v Mallorca
Getafe v Real Madrid
Osasuna v Valencia
Real Sociedad v Villarreal
Real Valladolid v Real Betis
Sevilla v Athletic Bilbao

OCTOBER 16
Athletic Bilbao v Atletico Madrid
Celta Vigo v Real Sociedad
Espanyol v Real Valladolid
Girona v Cadiz
Mallorca v Sevilla
Rayo Vallecano v Getafe
Real Betis v Almeria
Real Madrid v Barcelona
Valencia v Elche
Villarreal v Osasuna

OCTOBER 19
Almeria v Girona
Atletico Madrid v Rayo Vallecano
Barcelona v Villarreal
Cadiz v Real Betis
Elche v Real Madrid
Getafe v Athletic Bilbao
Osasuna v Espanyol
Real Sociedad v Mallorca
Real Valladolid v Celta Vigo
Sevilla v Valencia

OCTOBER 23
Barcelona v Athletic Bilbao
Celta Vigo v Getafe
Espanyol v Elche
Girona v Osasuna
Rayo Vallecano v Cadiz
Real Betis v Atletico Madrid
Real Madrid v Sevilla
Real Valladolid v Real Sociedad
Valencia v Mallorca
Villarreal v Almeria

OCTOBER 30
Almeria v Celta Vigo
Athletic Bilbao v Villarreal
Cadiz v Atletico Madrid
Elche v Getafe
Mallorca v Espanyol
Osasuna v Real Valladolid
Real Madrid v Girona
Real Sociedad v Real Betis
Sevilla v Rayo Vallecano
Valencia v Barcelona

NOVEMBER 6
Atletico Madrid v Espanyol
Barcelona v Almeria
Celta Vigo v Osasuna
Getafe v Cadiz
Girona v Athletic Bilbao
Rayo Vallecano v Real Madrid
Real Betis v Sevilla
Real Sociedad v Valencia
Real Valladolid v Elche
Villarreal v Mallorca

NOVEMBER 9
Almeria v Getafe
Athletic Bilbao v Real Valladolid
Elche v Girona
Espanyol v Villarreal
Mallorca v Atletico Madrid
Osasuna v Barcelona
Rayo Vallecano v Celta Vigo
Real Madrid v Cadiz
Sevilla v Real Sociedad
Valencia v Real Betis

DECEMBER 31
Atletico Madrid v Elche
Barcelona v Espanyol
Cadiz v Almeria
Celta Vigo v Sevilla
Getafe v Mallorca
Girona v Rayo Vallecano
Real Betis v Athletic Bilbao

El Clasico...takes place in October and March

Andalucia clash ...Sevilla battle Real Betis in May

Real Sociedad v Osasuna
Real Valladolid v Real Madrid
Villarreal v Valencia

JANUARY 8

Almeria v Real Sociedad
Athletic Bilbao v Osasuna
Atletico Madrid v Barcelona
Elche v Celta Vigo
Espanyol v Girona
Mallorca v Real Valladolid
Rayo Vallecano v Real Betis
Sevilla v Getafe
Valencia v Cadiz
Villarreal v Real Madrid

JANUARY 15

Almeria v Atletico Madrid
Cadiz v Elche
Celta Vigo v Villarreal
Getafe v Espanyol
Girona v Sevilla
Osasuna v Mallorca
Real Betis v Barcelona
Real Madrid v Valencia
Real Sociedad v Athletic Bilbao
Real Valladolid v Rayo Vallecano

JANUARY 22

Athletic Bilbao v Real Madrid
Atletico Madrid v Real Valladolid
Barcelona v Getafe
Elche v Osasuna
Espanyol v Real Betis
Mallorca v Celta Vigo
Rayo Vallecano v Real Sociedad
Sevilla v Cadiz
Valencia v Almeria
Villarreal v Girona

JANUARY 29

Almeria v Espanyol
Cadiz v Mallorca
Celta Vigo v Athletic Bilbao
Getafe v Real Betis
Osasuna v Atletico Madrid
Girona v Barcelona
Real Madrid v Real Sociedad
Real Valladolid v Valencia
Sevilla v Elche
Villarreal v Rayo Vallecano

FEBRUARY 5

Athletic Bilbao v Cadiz
Atletico Madrid v Getafe
Barcelona v Sevilla
Elche v Villarreal
Espanyol v Osasuna
Girona v Valencia
Mallorca v Real Madrid
Rayo Vallecano v Almeria
Real Betis v Celta Vigo
Real Sociedad v Real Valladolid

FEBRUARY 12

Almeria v Real Betis
Cadiz v Girona
Celta Vigo v Atletico Madrid
Espanyol v Real Sociedad
Getafe v Rayo Vallecano
Real Madrid v Elche
Real Valladolid v Osasuna
Sevilla v Mallorca
Valencia v Athletic Bilbao
Villarreal v Barcelona

FEBRUARY 19

Atletico Madrid v Athletic Bilbao
Barcelona v Cadiz
Elche v Espanyol
Getafe v Valencia
Girona v Almeria
Mallorca v Villarreal
Osasuna v Real Madrid
Rayo Vallecano v Sevilla
Real Betis v Real Valladolid
Real Sociedad v Celta Vigo

FEBRUARY 26

Almeria v Barcelona
Athletic Bilbao v Girona
Cadiz v Rayo Vallecano
Celta Vigo v Real Valladolid
Elche v Real Betis
Espanyol v Mallorca
Real Madrid v Atletico Madrid
Sevilla v Osasuna
Valencia v Real Sociedad
Villarreal v Getafe

MARCH 5

Almeria v Villarreal
Atletico Madrid v Sevilla
Barcelona v Valencia
Getafe v Girona
Mallorca v Elche
Osasuna v Celta Vigo
Rayo Vallecano v Athletic Bilbao
Real Betis v Real Madrid
Real Sociedad v Cadiz
Real Valladolid v Espanyol

MARCH 12

Athletic Bilbao v Barcelona
Cadiz v Getafe
Celta Vigo v Rayo Vallecano
Elche v Real Valladolid
Girona v Atletico Madrid
Mallorca v Real Sociedad
Real Madrid v Espanyol
Sevilla v Almeria
Valencia v Osasuna
Villarreal v Real Betis

MARCH 19

Almeria v Cadiz
Atletico Madrid v Valencia
Barcelona v Real Madrid
Espanyol v Celta Vigo
Getafe v Sevilla
Osasuna v Villarreal
Rayo Vallecano v Girona
Real Betis v Mallorca
Real Sociedad v Elche
Real Valladolid v Athletic Bilbao

APRIL 2

Athletic Bilbao v Getafe
Atletico Madrid v Real Betis
Cadiz v Sevilla
Celta Vigo v Almeria
Elche v Barcelona
Girona v Espanyol
Mallorca v Osasuna
Real Madrid v Real Valladolid
Valencia v Rayo Vallecano
Villarreal v Real Sociedad

APRIL 9

Almeria v Valencia
Barcelona v Girona
Espanyol v Athletic Bilbao
Osasuna v Elche
Rayo Vallecano v Atletico Madrid
Real Betis v Cadiz
Real Madrid v Villarreal
Real Sociedad v Getafe
Real Valladolid v Mallorca
Sevilla v Celta Vigo

APRIL 16

Athletic Bilbao v Real Sociedad
Atletico Madrid v Almeria
Cadiz v Real Madrid
Celta Vigo v Mallorca
Getafe v Barcelona
Girona v Elche
Rayo Vallecano v Osasuna
Real Betis v Espanyol
Valencia v Sevilla
Villarreal v Real Valladolid

APRIL 23

Almeria v Athletic Bilbao
Barcelona v Atletico Madrid
Elche v Valencia
Espanyol v Cadiz
Mallorca v Getafe
Osasuna v Real Betis
Real Madrid v Celta Vigo
Real Sociedad v Rayo Vallecano
Real Valladolid v Girona
Sevilla v Villarreal

APRIL 26

Athletic Bilbao v Sevilla
Atletico Madrid v Mallorca
Cadiz v Osasuna
Celta Vigo v Elche
Getafe v Almeria
Girona v Real Madrid
Rayo Vallecano v Barcelona
Real Betis v Real Sociedad
Valencia v Real Valladolid
Villarreal v Espanyol

Final-day showdown... Villarreal v Atletico

APRIL 30

Barcelona v Real Betis
Cadiz v Valencia
Elche v Rayo Vallecano
Espanyol v Getafe
Mallorca v Athletic Bilbao
Osasuna v Real Sociedad
Real Madrid v Almeria
Real Valladolid v Atletico Madrid
Sevilla v Girona
Villarreal v Celta Vigo

MAY 3

Almeria v Elche
Athletic Bilbao v Real Betis
Atletico Madrid v Cadiz
Barcelona v Osasuna
Getafe v Celta Vigo
Girona v Mallorca
Rayo Vallecano v Real Valladolid
Real Sociedad v Real Madrid
Sevilla v Espanyol
Valencia v Villarreal

MAY 14

Celta Vigo v Valencia
Elche v Atletico Madrid
Espanyol v Barcelona
Mallorca v Cadiz
Osasuna v Almeria
Real Betis v Rayo Vallecano
Real Madrid v Getafe
Real Sociedad v Girona
Real Valladolid v Sevilla
Villarreal v Athletic Bilbao

MAY 21

Almeria v Mallorca
Athletic Bilbao v Celta Vigo
Atletico Madrid v Osasuna
Barcelona v Real Sociedad
Cadiz v Real Valladolid
Getafe v Elche
Girona v Villarreal
Rayo Vallecano v Espanyol
Sevilla v Real Betis
Valencia v Real Madrid

MAY 24

Celta Vigo v Girona
Elche v Sevilla
Espanyol v Atletico Madrid
Mallorca v Valencia
Osasuna v Athletic Bilbao
Real Betis v Getafe
Real Madrid v Rayo Vallecano
Real Sociedad v Almeria
Real Valladolid v Barcelona
Villarreal v Cadiz

MAY 28

Almeria v Real Valladolid
Athletic Bilbao v Elche
Atletico Madrid v Real Sociedad
Barcelona v Mallorca
Cadiz v Celta Vigo
Getafe v Osasuna
Girona v Real Betis
Rayo Vallecano v Villarreal
Sevilla v Real Madrid
Valencia v Espanyol

JUNE 4

Celta Vigo v Barcelona
Elche v Cadiz
Espanyol v Almeria
Mallorca v Rayo Vallecano
Osasuna v Girona
Real Betis v Valencia
Real Madrid v Athletic Bilbao
Real Sociedad v Sevilla
Real Valladolid v Getafe
Villarreal v Atletico Madrid

•Fixtures are for the weekend commencing rather than the exact date of the games and are subject to change

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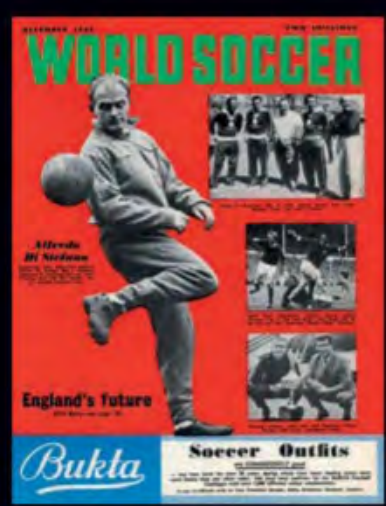

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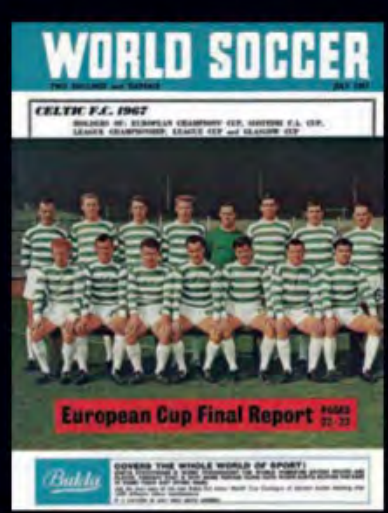

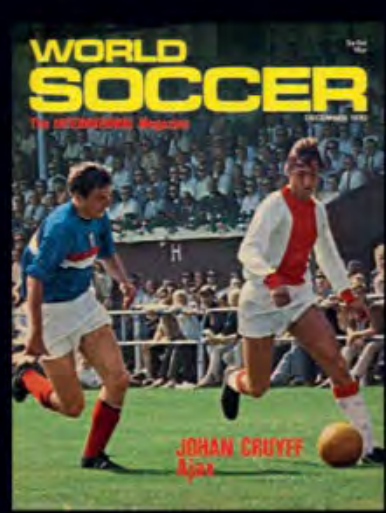

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Club Football

AFRICA

Final Tables 2021-22

BENIN

Championship Round

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Coton Sport Ouidah (C)	24	15	4	5	33	17	49
Buffles	24	13	8	3	31	12	47
Loto Popo	24	14	5	5	27	12	47
Espoir Savalou	24	14	4	6	34	21	46
ASVO	24	12	7	5	31	17	43
Dynamo Abomey	24	13	3	8	33	27	42
Ayema	24	9	9	6	27	24	36
AS Cotonou	24	9	6	9	29	22	33
Dadje	24	8	8	8	25	21	32
Pantheres	24	7	9	8	22	29	30
Djeffa	24	8	3	13	17	26	27
Beke Bembereke	24	6	6	12	15	26	24
JSP	24	5	6	13	28	43	21
Cavaliers	24	6	3	15	23	40	21
Eternel	24	5	5	14	14	27	20
Adjidja	24	2	6	16	14	39	12

North Relegation Round

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Tukunnin (Q)	18	9	5	4	26	20	32
Damissa	18	6	8	4	16	11	26
Hodio	18	6	7	5	20	17	25
Real Sport	18	6	7	5	13	11	25
Dynamique Djougou	18	6	5	7	17	23	23
Dynamo Parakou	18	5	7	6	20	21	22
Tonnerre	18	5	6	7	15	14	21
Soleil (R)	18	5	6	7	16	19	21
Energie (R)	18	5	6	7	11	15	21
USB (R)	18	3	11	4	17	20	20

South Relegation Round

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
ASPAC (Q)	18	8	9	1	21	9	33
Dragons	18	9	4	5	22	16	31
Requins	18	8	6	4	26	15	30
Sitatunga	18	8	4	6	22	20	28
Sobemap	18	7	6	5	16	17	27
Avrankou Omnisport	18	6	5	7	17	20	23
JAC	18	6	4	8	15	16	22
UPI-ONM (R)	18	3	8	7	22	27	17
Police (R)	18	4	5	9	15	29	17
ASOS (R)	18	3	5	10	12	19	14

Plate Final

Jun 15: ASPAC 0-2 Tukunnin

CAMEROON

Group A

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Les Astres (Q)	24	15	6	3	36	18	51
Canon (Q)	24	13	6	5	34	20	45
Colombe	24	12	4	8	47	28	40
Union Douala	24	11	6	7	31	24	39
Djiko	24	9	9	6	29	27	36
APEJES Academy	24	10	5	9	27	30	35
Stade Renard	24	9	7	8	32	27	34
Fortuna Mfou	24	9	5	10	44	43	32
Young Sport Academy	24	7	8	9	23	27	29
Fauve Azur Elite	24	6	10	8	37	42	28
Panthere	24	7	6	11	28	36	27
Tonnerre* (R)	24	4	5	15	17	43	14
Racing (R)	24	2	7	15	20	40	13

*Deducted 3 points

Group B

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Eding Sport (Q)	22	14	5	3	29	12	47
Cotonsport (Q)	22	12	6	4	37	14	42
PWD	22	9	6	7	26	22	33
Fovu Club	22	8	9	5	20	19	33
Bamboutos	22	8	8	6	24	21	32
UMS de Loum	22	7	10	5	24	19	31
Avion Academy	22	6	9	7	20	20	27
Dragon de Yaounde	22	6	5	11	25	35	23
Renaissance	22	6	5	11	20	30	23
Yafoot (R)	22	5	7	10	21	25	22
OFTA (R)	22	3	10	9	16	33	19
New Star* (R)	22	5	6	11	17	29	18

*Deducted 3 points

Final Stages

Relegation Play-Off

Jul 1: Yafoot 0-1 Panthere

Semi-Finals

Jun 30: Eding Sport p0-0 Canon; Les Astres 0-2 Cotonsport

Third-Place Play-Off

Jun 30: Canon 3-2 Les Astres

Final

Jul 3: Eding Sport 1-1p Cotonsport

CAPE VERDE

Group A

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Rosariense (Q)	6	5	1	0	12	3	16
Sporting Praia	6	3	0	3	10	10	9
Varandinha	6	2	1	3	4	5	7
Ultramarina	6	1	0	5	3	11	3

Group B

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Palmeira (Q)	6	4	1	1	10	5	13
Academica Boavista	6	2	2	2	2	5	8
Morabeza	6	1	3	2	5	4	6
Academica Porto Novo	6	1	2	3	5	8	5

Group C

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Academica do Mindelo (Q)	6	3	2	1	13	8	11
Botafogo (Q)	6	2	3	1	8	6	9
Mindelense	6	2	1	3	3	7	7
Barreirense	6	1	2	3	5	8	5

Final Stages

Semi-Finals

Jun 24-25: Academica do Mindelo 2-2 Rosariense; Botafogo 0-0 Palmeira

Jul 1-2: Palmeira 0-0 Botafogo *(agg 0-0)*; Rosariense 0-4 Academica do Mindelo *(agg 2-6)*

Final

Jul 8: Academica do Mindelo 1-0 Palmeira

ETHIOPIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Kedus Giorgis (C)	30	18	11	1	50	11	65
Fasil Kenema	30	18	7	5	49	23	61
Sidama Bunna	30	12	12	6	40	30	48
Awassa Kenema	30	13	6	11	38	38	45
Welayta Dicha	30	11	9	10	23	24	42
Ethiopia Bunna	30	11	9	10	29	37	42
Arba Minch Kenema	30	9	13	8	27	26	40
Wolkite Ketema	30	9	11	10	33	36	38
Mekelakeya	30	9	10	11	25	25	37
Hadiya Hosaena	30	8	13	9	36	40	37
Adama Kenema	30	6	17	7	24	23	35
Bahardar	30	8	11	11	29	29	35
Dire Dawa Kenema	30	8	9	13	28	40	33
Addis Ababa Ketema	30	7	11	12	37	42	32
Sebeta Kenema (R)	30	5	10	15	22	46	25
Jimma Aba Jifar (R)	30	6	5	19	23	43	23

GHANA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Asante Kotoko (C)	34	19	10	5	48	20	67
Medeama	34	16	8	10	28	25	56
Bechem United	34	13	15	6	37	24	54
Karela United	34	13	13	8	43	33	52
Great Olympics	34	12	12	10	36	31	48
Hearts of Oak	34	12	12	10	33	29	48
Ashanti Gold	34	13	8	13	46	37	47
Berekum Chelsea	34	12	11	11	29	30	47
Legon Cities	34	11	13	10	34	26	46
Bibiani Gold Stars	34	14	4	16	34	40	46
Aduana Stars	34	11	12	11	33	28	45
Accra Lions	34	12	9	13	26	38	45
Dreams	34	11	11	12	47	44	44
King Faisal	34	12	6	16	30	34	42
RTU	34	10	11	13	40	48	41
Eleven Wonders (R)	34	10	10	14	29	38	40
WAFA (R)	34	8	11	15	27	42	35
Elmina Sharks (R)	34	5	8	21	24	57	23

IVORY COAST

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
ASEC Mimosas (C)	26	21	4	1	47	18	67
Sporting Gagnoa	26	16	4	6	33	19	52
San-Pedro	26	13	7	6	28	15	46
ES Bafing	26	9	8	9	32	26	35
SOA	26	8	11	7	22	24	35
Lys Sassandra	26	9	8	9	19	22	35
AFAD	26	9	7	10	27	29	34
Stella	26	9	7	10	29	33	34
Racing d'Abidjan	26	8	9	9	28	28	33
SOL	26	9	5	12	41	35	32
Bassam	26	7	7	12	22	33	28
Bouake	26	7	5	14	18	29	26
Indenie Abengourou (R)	26	6	8	12	18	33	26
Korhogo (R)	26	3	6	17	27	47	15

KENYA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Tusker (C)	34	19	9	6	42	17	66
Homeboyz	34	18	12	4	54	33	66
Gor Mahia	34	15	13	6	38	29	58
Bandari	34	15	12	7	42	26	57
Nairobi City Stars	34	14	10	10	45	34	52
Leopards	33	12	13	8	42	35	49
KCB	34	12	13	9	40	33	49
Sofapaka	33	12	13	8	32	26	49
Police	34	11	14	9	44	35	47
Kariobangi Sharks	34	12	9	13	44	39	45
Posta Rangers	34	12	8	14	44	41	44
Talanta	34	11	11	12	39	43	44
Ulinzi Stars	32	10	13	9	21	22	43
Nzoia Sugar	34	7	16	11	36	39	37
Bidco United	34	8	12	14	32	40	36
Wazito*	34	9	7	18	34	50	34
Vihiga Bullets (R)	34	6	9	19	25	58	27
Mathare United (R)	34	3	2	29	18	72	11

*Enter relegation play-off

MAURITANIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Nouadhibou (C)	26	16	8	2	46	16	56
Tevragh-Zeine	26	14	9	3	46	18	51
SNIM	26	13	8	5	32	19	47
Concorde	26	12	8	6	41	33	44
Police	26	11	7	8	24	20	40
Tidjikja	26	9	11	6	30	21	38
Garde Nationale	26	11	5	10	33	29	38
AC Douane	26	9	8	9	28	22	35
Nouakchott King's	26	9	5	12	32	30	32
Trarza AC	26	8	5	13	21	28	29
Kaedi	26	6	9	11	17	30	27
Ksar	26	6	6	14	29	48	24
Armee (R)	26	7	2	17	23	40	23
Gourel Sangue (R)	26	4	3	19	17	65	15

MOROCCO

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Wydad (C)	30	19	6	5	46	24	63
Raja	30	17	9	4	41	21	60
FAR Rabat	30	13	9	8	38	29	48
Maghreb Fes	30	9	18	3	28	17	45
FUS Rabat	30	11	10	9	34	30	43
RSB Berkane	30	10	11	9	39	33	41
Olympic Safi	30	9	12	9	29	27	39
Difaa El Jadida	30	9	11	10	32	40	38
Khouribga	30	8	12	10	32	37	36
JS Soualem	30	9	9	12	37	38	36
Chabab Mohammedia	30	8	10	12	27	32	34
Mouloudia Oujda	30	7	12	11	35	38	33
Hassania Agadir	30	9	7	14	26	30	34
Ittihad Tanger	30	8	9	13	31	41	33
Rapide Oued Zem (R)	30	7	8	15	19	39	29
Youssoufia Berrechid (R)	30	5	11	14	25	43	26

RWANDA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
APR (C)	30	20	6	4	42	18	66
Kiyovu Sports	30	19	8	3	40	16	65
AS Kigali	30	12	13	5	43	27	49
Rayon Sports	30	12	12	6	33	28	48
Mukura	30	12	11	7	32	23	47
Musanze	30	10	10	10	32	28	40
Police	30	10	10	10	36	33	40
Bugesera	30	9	10	11	33	33	37
Marine	30	10	7	13	34	42	37
Espoir	30	8	11	11	27	35	35
Gasogi United	30	9	7	14	31	35	34
Etincelles	30	9	7	14	29	38	34
Gorilla	30	8	9	13	33	33	33
Rutsiro	30	7	11	12	24	34	32
Etoile de l'Est (R)	30	6	10	14	25	44	28
Gicumbi (R)	30	2	12	16	16	43	18

SAO TOME E PRINCIPE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Militar 6 Setembro (C)	20	15	2	3	51	18	47
Agrosport	20	12	4	4	35	20	40
UDRA	20	10	5	5	39	31	35
Trindade	20	10	2	8	34	29	32
Vitoria	20	8	5	7	33	28	29
Caixao Grande	20	7	5	8	29	20	26
Sporting Praia Cruz	20	7	4	9	28	38	25
Alianca Nacional	20	6	6	8	29	32	24
Sporting Sao Tome	20	8	0	12	22	41	24
Guadalupe	20	5	5	10	18	34	20
Palmar Lusitano (R)	20	4	6	10	26	41	18
UD Correia (R)	20	5	2	13	26	38	17

TANZANIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Young Africans (C)	30	22	8	0	49	8	74
Simba	30	17	10	3	41	14	61
Azam	30	14	7	9	41	28	49
Geita Gold	30	12	10	8	32	26	46
Namungo	30	10	11	9	42	34	41
Kagera Sugar	30	9	12	9	20	25	39
Coastal Union	30	10	8	12	22	31	38
Polisi Tanzania	30	8	13	9	21	23	37
Mbeya City	30	8	13	9	25	29	37
KMC	30	8	11	11	34	35	35
Dodoma Jiji	30	9	8	13	25	37	35
Ruvu Shooting	30	8	10	12	28	39	34
Mtibwa Sugar*	30	7	10	13	25	34	31
Tanzania Prisons*	30	7	8	15	21	34	29
Biashara United (R)	30	5	13	12	23	35	28
Mbeya Kwanza (R)	30	5	10	15	22	39	25

*Enter relegation play-off

TUNISIA

Group A

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Esperance	14	8	3	3	20	7	27
CS Sfaxien	14	6	3	5	12	10	21
Ben Guerdane	14	5	6	3	10	8	21
Tataouine	14	6	3	5	13	15	21
Bizertin	14	6	1	7	13	15	19
Metlaoui	14	4	5	5	11	15	17
Hammam-Sousse	14	3	7	4	11	11	16
Hammam-Lif (R)	14	2	4	8	9	18	10

Group B

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Club Africain	14	7	4	3	11	6	25
Monastir	14	6	5	3	8	5	23
Etoile du Sahel	14	5	7	2	14	8	22
Rejiche	14	5	5	4	10	10	20
Soliman	14	4	5	5	7	9	17
Olympique Beja	14	4	4	6	9	10	16
Zarzis	14	3	4	7	6	13	13
Chebba (R)	14	3	4	7	6	10	13

Championship Round

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Esperance* (C)	10	6	3	1	16	8	24
Monastir**	10	6	2	2	16	9	22
CS Sfaxien**	10	3	5	2	10	7	16
Club Africain*	10	3	3	4	6	10	15
Etoile du Sahel***	10	3	3	4	13	11	13
Ben Guerdane***	10	0	2	8	3	19	3

*Awarded 3 points for finishing 1st in first group
**Awarded 2 points for finishing 2nd in first group
***Awarded 1 point for finishing 3rd in first group

Middle Play-Off

May 15: Tataouine 5-3 Rejiche; Bizertin 2-1 Soliman

Relegation Round

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Hammam-Sousse	6	2	3	1	6	5	9
Olympique Beja*	6	2	2	2	5	2	9
Metlaoui* (R)	6	2	2	2	5	6	9
Zarzis (R)	6	1	3	2	4	7	6

*Awarded 1 point for finishing 6th in first group

ASIA

Final Tables 2021-22

IRAQ

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Al Shorta (C)	38	28	7	3	64	21	91
Al Quwa Al Jawiya	38	20	10	8	50	31	70
Al Talaba	38	20	9	9	54	33	69
Naft	38	16	16	6	38	20	64
Naft Al Wasat	38	17	13	8	50	36	64
Al Zawra'a	38	15	16	7	40	27	61
Al Najaf	38	15	12	11	40	35	57
Newroz	38	14	9	15	40	43	51
Al Kahrabaa	38	13	11	14	36	37	50
Zakho	38	11	15	12	35	33	48
Erbil	38	12	11	15	37	42	47
Naft Al Basra	38	11	13	14	38	40	46
Naft Maysan	38	10	16	12	30	34	46
Al Karkh	38	8	19	11	32	36	43
Al Sinaah	38	8	17	13	30	37	41
Al-Qasim	38	8	17	13	34	50	41
Baghdad (R)	38	9	12	17	32	41	39
Al Diwaniya (R)	38	10	9	19	33	51	39
Al Minaa Basra (R)	38	3	21	14	33	49	30
Samarra (R)	38	1	9	28	20	70	12

SAUDI ARABIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Al Hilal (C)	30	20	7	3	63	28	67
Al Ittihad	30	20	5	5	62	29	65
Al Nassr	30	19	4	7	58	36	61
Al Shabab	30	15	10	5	52	36	55
Damak	30	12	8	10	38	44	44
Al Tai	30	11	4	15	33	45	37
Al Raed	30	10	6	14	35	45	36
Al Fateh	30	9	8	13	45	41	35
Abha	30	9	8	13	27	43	35
Al Feiha	30	8	11	11	21	24	35
Al Ittifaq	30	8	10	12	40	47	34
Al Taawoun	30	7	13	10	43	48	34
Al Batin	30	8	9	13	31	41	33
Al Faisaly (R)	30	7	12	11	28	37	33
Al Ahli (R)	30	6	14	10	38	43	32
Al Hazm (R)	30	4	5	21	23	50	17

2022 AFC CUP

Group Stage

Central Asia Zone

Group E

Jun 24: Sogdiana Jizzakh 2-0 Neftchi; Altyn Asyr 1-1 CSKA Pamir Dushanbe
Jun 27: Neftchi 0-1 Altyn Asyr; CSKA Pamir Dushanbe 2-3 Sogdiana Jizzakh
Jun 30: Sogdiana Jizzakh 3-1 Altyn Asyr; CSKA Pamir Dushanbe 0-0 Neftchi

Final standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Sogdiana Jizzakh (Q)	3	3	0	0	8	3	9
Altyn Asyr	3	1	1	1	3	4	4
CSKA Pamir Dushanbe	3	0	2	1	3	4	2
Neftchi	3	0	1	2	0	3	1

Group F

Jun 24: Kopetdag 1-3 Khujand
Jun 27: Dordoi 0-1 Kopetdag
Jun 30: Khujand 0-0 Dordoi

Final standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Khujand (Q)	2	1	1	0	3	1	4
Kopetdag	2	1	0	1	2	3	3
Dordoi	2	0	1	1	0	1	1

ASEAN Zone

Group G

Jun 24: Kaya–Iloilo 1-2 Visakha FC; Bali United 2-0 Kedah Darul Aman
Jun 27: Visakha FC 5-2 Bali United; Kedah Darul Aman 4-1 Kaya–Iloilo
Jun 30: Kaya–Iloilo 0-1 Bali United; Kedah Darul Aman 5-1 Visakha FC

Final standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Kedah Darul Aman (Q)	3	2	0	1	9	4	6
Visakha FC	3	2	0	1	8	8	6
Bali United	3	2	0	1	5	5	6
Kaya–Iloilo	3	0	0	3	2	7	0

Group H

Jun 24: PSM Makassar 0-0 Kuala Lumpur City
Jun 27: Tampines Rovers 1-3 PSM Makassar
Jun 30: Kuala Lumpur City 2-1 Tampines Rovers

Final standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
PSM Makassar (Q)	2	1	1	0	3	1	4
Kuala Lumpur City (Q)	2	1	1	0	2	1	4
Tampines Rovers	2	0	0	2	2	5	0

Group I

Jun 24: Viettel 5-1 Young Elephants; Hougang United 4-3 Phnom Penh Crown
Jun 27: Phnom Penh Crown 0-1 Viettel; Young Elephants 1-3 Hougang United
Jun 30: Viettel 5-2 Hougang United; Phnom Penh Crown 4-2 Young Elephants

Final standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Viettel (Q)	3	3	0	0	11	3	9
Hougang United	3	2	0	1	9	9	6
Phnom Penh Crown	3	1	0	2	7	7	3
Young Elephants	3	0	0	3	4	12	0

East Asia Zone

Group J

Jun 24: Lee Man 1-3 Eastern
Jun 27: Tainan City 1-3 Lee Man
Jun 30: Eastern 3-1 Tainan City

Final standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Eastern (Q)	2	2	0	0	6	2	6
Lee Man	2	1	0	1	4	4	3
Tainan City	2	0	0	2	2	6	0
MUST CPK*	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

*Withdrew

CONCACAF

Final Tables 2021-22

ARUBA

Final Stage

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Dakota	6	5	0	1	19	6	15
RCA	6	4	1	1	14	9	13
La Fama	6	1	1	4	7	15	4
Britannia	6	1	0	5	10	20	3

Final
Jun 19: Dakota 4-2 RCA
Jun 23: RCA 2-2 Dakota *(agg 4-6)*

COSTA RICA

Clausura Final Stages

Semi-Finals
Jun 19-20: Cartagines 1-0 Herediano; Deportivo Saprissa 1-1 Alajuelense
Jun 22-23: Herediano 1-1 Cartagines *(agg 1-2)*; Alajuelense 3-1 Deportivo Saprissa *(agg 4-2)*

Final
Jun 26: Cartagines 0-0 Alajuelense
Jul 1: Alajuelense 1-1 Cartagines *(agg 1-1a)*

Gran Final
Jul 4: Cartagines 1-0 Alajuelense
Jul 7: Alajuelense 1-1 Cartagines *(agg 1-2)*

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

Regular Season

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Cibao*	14	9	3	2	26	14	30
Jarabacoa*	14	7	5	2	20	10	26
Moca*	14	6	6	2	22	17	24
Universidad O&M*	14	6	5	3	19	13	23
Vega Real*	14	5	4	5	15	15	19
Atletico Pantoja*	14	5	2	7	20	20	17
San Cristobal	14	1	4	9	11	26	7
Delfines Del Este	14	1	3	10	9	27	6

*Top six qualify for the championship round

GUADELOUPE

Relegation Play-Offs

Semi-Finals
Jun 18-19: USR Saint-Rose 1-1 Sporting Baie-Mahault; Amical Club 4-0 Marquisat
Jun 25: Sporting Baie-Mahault 2-1 USR Saint-Rose *(agg 3-2)*; Marquisat 1-3 Amical Club *(agg 1-7)*

Final
Jun 29: Amical Club 0-1 Sporting Baie-Mahault

Final Stages

Semi-Finals
Jun 18-19: Gosier 2-1 La Gauloise; Phare du Canal 1-1 Solidarite Scolaire
Jun 25: La Gauloise 3-1 Gosier *(agg 4-3)*; Solidarite Scolaire 2-0 Phare du Canal *(agg 3-1)*

Third-Place Play-Off
Jun 29: Gosier 1-2 Phare du Canal

Final
Jun 30: La Gauloise 1-1p Solidarite Scolaire

JAMAICA

Final Stages

Quarter-Finals
Jun 20-21: Harbour View 1-1 Arnett Gardens; Mount Pleasant Academy 0-0 Cavalier
Jun 23-24: Arnett Gardens 1-1 Harbour View *(agg 2-2p)*; Cavalier 1-1 Mount Pleasant Academy *(agg p1-1)*

Semi-Finals
Jun 26: Cavalier 0-1 Dunbeholden; Harbour View 1-0 Waterhouse
Jun 29: Dunbeholden 3-4 Cavalier *(agg p4-4)*; Waterhouse 1-1 Harbour View *(agg 1-2)*

Third-Place Play-Off
Jul 3: Waterhouse 1-4 Cavalier

Final
Jul 4: Harbour View p1-1 Dunbeholden

MARTINIQUE

Relegation Play-Offs

Finals
Jun 18: RC Lorrain 4-3 New Star; Riveraine 2-3 Olympique

Final Stages

Quarter-Finals
Jun 15-16: Club Franciscain 3-0 US Robert; Trenelle 0-1 Aiglon

Semi-Finals
Jun 18: Club Colonial 0-1 Club Franciscain; Golden Lion 0-0 Aiglon

Final
Jun 25: Golden Lion 3-1 Club Franciscain

PUERTO RICO

Regular Season

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Metropolitan (Q)	14	10	3	1	51	16	33
Bayamon (Q)	14	9	2	3	49	11	29
PR Sol (Q)	14	8	4	2	31	15	28
Academia Quintana (Q)	14	9	0	5	43	19	27
Fraigcomar	14	7	2	5	42	28	23
Guaynabo Gol	14	5	0	9	22	30	15
Caguas Sporting	14	1	2	11	11	67	5
Mayaguez	14	0	1	13	3	66	1

Final Stages

Semi-Finals
Jul 3-4: Metropolitan 8-1 Academia Quintana; Bayamon 1-1p PR Sol

Final
Jun 10: Metropolitan 5-0 PR Sol

EUROPE

2022-23 UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Preliminary Round

Jun 21: FCI Levadia 1-6 Vikingur Reykjavik
Jun 21: La Fiorita 1-2 Inter Club d'Escaldes

Jun 24: Inter Club d'Escaldes 0-1 Vikingur Reykjavik

First Qualifying Round

Jul 5-6: Pyunik 0-0 CFR Cluj; Maribor 0-0 Shakhtyor Soligorsk; Ludogorets 2-0 Sutjeska Niksic; F91 Dudelange 1-0 Tirana; Tobol 0-0 Ferencvaros; Malmo 3-2 Vikingur Reykjavik; Ballkani 1-1 Zalgiris; HJK 1-0 RFS; Bodo/Glimt 3-0 KI; The New Saints 1-0 Linfield; Shamrock Rovers 3-0 Hibernians; Lech Poznan 1-0 Qarabag; Shkupi 3-0 Lincoln Red Imps; Zrinjski 0-0 Sheriff Tiraspol; Slovan Bratislava 0-0 Dinamo Batumi

Jul 12-13: CFR Cluj 2-2 Pyunik *(agg 2-2p)*; Shakhtyor Soligorsk 0-2 Maribor *(agg 0-2)*; Sutjeska Niksic 0-1 Ludogorets *(agg 0-3)*; Tirana 1-2 F91 Dudelange *(agg 1-3)*; Ferencvaros 5-1 Tobol *(agg 5-1)*; Vikingur Reykjavik 3-3 Malmo *(agg 5-6)*; Zalgiris 1-0 Ballkani *(agg 2-1)*; RFS 2-1 HJK *(agg 2-2p)*; KI 3-1 Bodo/Glimt *(agg 3-4)*; Linfield 2-0 The New Saints *(agg 2-1)*; Hibernians 0-0 Shamrock Rovers *(agg 0-3)*; Qarabag 5-1 Lech Poznan *(agg 5-2)*; Lincoln Red Imps 2-0 Shkupi *(agg 2-3)*; Sheriff Tiraspol 1-0 Zrinjski *(agg 1-0)*; Dinamo Batumi 1-2 Slovan Bratislava *(agg 1-2)*

2022-23 UEFA EUROPA CONFERENCE LEAGUE

First Qualifying Round

Jul 5-7: Alashkert 1-0 Hamrun Spartans; Lechia Gdansk 4-1 Akademija Pandev; Inter Turku 1-0 Drita; Dinamo Tbilisi 2-3 Paide Linnameeskond; Panevezys 0-0 Milsami Orhei; Laci 0-0 Iskra; Gjilani 1-0 Liepaja; Sfintul Gheorghe 1-2 Mura; KuPS 2-0 Dila Gori; Ruzomberok 2-0 Kauno Zalgiris; Buducnost Podgorica 2-0 Llapi; Gzira United 1-1 Atletic Club d'Escaldes; Borac Banja Luka 2-0 B36 Torshavn; Olimpija Ljubljana 1-1 Differdange 03; St Joseph's 0-0 Larne; UE Santa Coloma 0-1 Breidablik; DAC 2-1 Cliftonville; Vikingur 1-0 Europa; Bala Town 1-2 Sligo Rovers; Fola Esch 0-1 Tre Fiori: Dinamo Minsk 1-1 Decic; Tre Penne 0-2 Tuzla City; Saburtalo Tbilisi 0-1 Partizani; Shkendija 2-0 Ararat Yerevan; Floriana 0-0 Petrocub Hincesti; Pogon Szczecin 4-1 KR; HB 1-0 Newtown; Bruno's Magpies 2-1 Crusaders; Flora 1-0 SJK; Derry City 0-2 Riga

Jul 12-14: Hamrun Spartans 4-1 Alashkert *(agg 4-2)*; Akademija Pandev 1-2 Lechia Gdansk *(agg 2-6)*; Drita 3-0 Inter Turku *(agg 3-1)*; Paide Linnameeskond 1-2 Dinamo Tbilisi *(agg p4-4)*; Milsami Orhei 2-0 Panevezys *(agg 2-0)*; Iskra 0-1 Laci *(agg 0-1)*; Liepaja 3-1 Gjilani *(agg 3-2)*; Mura 2-1 Sfintul Gheorghe *(agg 4-2)*; Dila Gori 0-0 KuPS *(agg 0-2)*; Kauno Zalgiris 0-0 Ruzomberok *(agg 0-2)*; Llapi 2-2 Buducnost Podgorica *(agg 2-4)*; Atletic Club d'Escaldes 0-1 Gzira United *(agg 1-2)*; B36 Torshavn 3-1 Borac Banja Luka *(agg p3-3)*; Differdange 03 1-2 Olimpija Ljubljana *(agg 2-3)*; Larne 0-1 St Joseph's *(agg 0-1)*; Breidablik 4-1 UE Santa Coloma *(agg 5-1)*; Cliftonville 0-3 DAC *(agg 1-5)*; Europa 1-2 Vikingur *(agg 1-3)*; Sligo Rovers 0-1 Bala Town *(agg p2-2)*; Tre Fiori 3-1 Fola Esch *(agg 4-1)*; Decic 1-2 Dinamo Minsk *(agg 2-3)*; Tuzla City 6-0 Tre Penne *(agg 8-0)*; Partizani 0-1 Saburtalo Tbilisi *(agg 1-1p)*; Ararat Yerevan 2-2 Shkendija *(agg 2-4)*; Petrocub Hincesti 1-0 Floriana *(agg 1-0)*; KR 1-0 Pogon Szczecin *(agg 2-4)*; Newtown 2-1 HB *(agg p2-2)*; Crusaders 3-1 Bruno's Magpies *(agg 4-3)*; SJK 4-2 Flora *(agg 4-3)*; Riga 2-0 Derry City *(agg 4-0)*

OCEANIA

2022 OFC CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

National Play-Offs

New Caledonia
Jun 4: Ne Drehu 2-2 Hienghene Sport
Jun 6: Hienghene Sport 2-1 Ne Drehu *(agg 4-3)*

Tahiti
Jun 14: Pirae 0-1 Venus (AET)

Fiji
Jun 17: Lautoka 1-1 Rewa
Jun 19: Rewa 4-0 Lautoka *(agg 5-1)*

Vanuatu
Jun 18: RueRue 0-0 Galaxy
Jun 25: Galaxy 5-0 RueRue *(agg 5-0)*

Solomon Islands
Jun 19: Solomon Warriors 1-1 Central Coast
Jun 25: Central Coast 2-2 Solomon Warriors *(AET, agg p3-3)*

Papua New Guinea
Jun 25: Lae City 2-1 Hekari United

Group Stage Draw

Group A
Venus, Galaxy, Lae City, Central Coast

Group B
Nikao Sokattack, Auckland City, Hienghene Sport, Rewa

SOUTH AMERICA

Final Tables 2022

COLOMBIA

Apertura First Stage

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Millonarios (Q)	20	13	3	4	23	11	42
Tolima (Q)	20	12	4	4	29	14	40
Atletico Nacional (Q)	20	10	6	4	26	15	36
Independiente Medellin (Q)	20	10	4	6	25	19	34
Junior (Q)	20	10	2	8	30	21	32
Envigado (Q)	20	8	7	5	22	21	31
La Equidad (Q)	20	7	9	4	21	16	30
Atlético Bucaramanga (Q)	20	8	5	7	27	25	29
Alianza Petrolera	20	7	8	5	22	20	29
Santa Fe	20	7	6	7	29	26	27
Jaguares	20	8	3	9	26	29	27

Once Caldas	20	6	8	6	18	18	26
Aguilas Doradas	20	7	4	9	17	26	25
Deportivo Pereira	20	6	5	9	21	26	23
America de Cali	20	6	5	9	20	25	23
Deportivo Pasto	20	5	7	8	16	20	22
Patriotas	20	5	6	9	19	23	21
Cortulua	20	5	5	10	21	27	20
Deportivo Cali	20	4	6	10	14	24	18
Union Magdalena	20	2	5	13	8	28	11

Semi-Finals Group A

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Atletico Nacional (Q)	6	3	3	0	10	5	12
Junior	6	2	2	2	5	6	8
Millonarios	6	1	3	2	5	6	6
Atlético Bucaramanga	6	2	0	4	5	8	6

Semi-Finals Group B

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Tolima (Q)	6	4	1	1	7	2	13
Independiente Medellin	6	3	2	1	9	3	11
La Equidad	6	3	0	3	7	8	9
Envigado	6	0	1	5	2	12	1

Apertura Final

Jun 23: Atletico Nacional 3-1 Tolima
Jun 27: Tolima 2-1 Atletico Nacional *(agg 3-4)*

PARAGUAY

Apertura

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Libertad (C)	22	18	3	1	49	14	57
Cerro Porteno	22	16	2	4	38	13	50
Olimpia	22	13	4	5	41	23	43
Club Guarani	22	9	5	8	30	24	32
Resistencia	22	7	7	8	30	36	28
Nacional	22	7	5	10	27	32	26
Sol de America	22	6	7	9	20	28	25
Guairena	22	5	8	9	21	26	23
General Caballero JLM	22	6	5	11	23	33	23
Tacuary	22	6	4	12	16	29	22
Sportivo Ameliano	22	5	4	13	25	38	19
12 de Octubre	22	3	8	11	16	40	17

PERU

Apertura

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Melgar*	18	13	2	3	23	11	41
Sport Huancayo	18	12	4	2	35	18	40
Sporting Cristal	18	11	5	2	35	20	38
Alianza Lima	18	10	3	5	28	16	33
Cienciano	18	9	5	4	37	22	32
Deportivo Binacional	18	10	1	7	24	19	31
Universidad Cesar Vallejo	18	8	6	4	25	15	30
Alianza Atletico	18	9	3	6	26	27	30
Universitario	18	8	4	6	24	19	28
Deportivo Municipal	18	7	4	7	30	36	25
UTC	18	6	2	10	29	32	20
Carlos A. Mannucci	18	5	5	8	19	22	20
Atletico Grau	18	4	6	8	20	23	18
Sport Boys	18	5	3	10	17	32	18
ADT	18	3	7	8	14	24	16
Cantolao	18	4	3	11	18	32	15
Universidad San Martin	18	4	3	11	21	37	15
Carlos Stein	18	3	5	10	18	31	14
Ayacucho	18	3	3	12	25	32	12

*Qualify for the final play-offs

2022 COPA LIBERTADORES

Round of 16 – 1st Leg

Jun 28 – Curitiba
Athletico Paranaense 2 (Vitor Roque 6, Hernandez 32)
Libertad 1 (Villalba 20)

Jun 28 – Guayaquil
Emelec 1 (S. Rodriguez 58 pen)
Atletico Mineiro 1 (Ademir 16)

Jun 28 – Sao Paulo
Corinthians 0
Boca Juniors 0

Jun 29 – Ibague
Tolima 0
Flamengo 1 (A. Pereira 17)

Jun 29 – Buenos Aires
Velez Sarsfield 1 (Janson 15 pen)
River Plate 0

Jun 29 – Asuncion
Cerro Porteno 0
Palmeiras 3 (Rony 60, 69, Murilo 87)

Jun 29 – Cordoba
Tallares 1 (Franco 87)
Colon 1 (Abila 61)

Jun 30 – Fortaleza
Fortaleza 1 (Romero 55)
Estudiantes 1 (Diaz 63)

Round of 16 – 2nd Leg

Jul 5 – Asuncion
Libertad 1 (Santa Cruz 45+4)
Athletico Paranaense 1 (Romulo 90)
Athletico Paranaense win 3-2 on aggregate

Jul 5 – Belo Horizonte
Atletico Mineiro 1 (Hulk 79 pen)
Emelec 0
Atletico Mineiro win 2-1 on aggregate

Jul 5 – Buenos Aires
Boca Juniors 0
Corinthians 0
0-0 on aggregate. Corinthians win 6-5 on pens

Jul 6 – Rio deJaneiro
Flamengo 7 (Pedro 5, 47, 67, 79, Quinones 20 og, Gabriel Barbosa 56, Matheus Franca 73)
Tolima 1 (Quinones 63)
Flamengo win 8-1 on aggregate

Jul 6 – Buenos Aires
River Plate 0
Velez Sarsfield 0
Velez Sarsfield win 1-0 on aggregate

Jul 6 – Sao Paulo
Palmeiras 5 (Samudio 37 og, Rony 73, 83, Breno Lopes 75, Gomez 78)
Cerro Porteno 0
Palmeiras win 8-0 on aggregate

Jul 6 – Santa Fe
Colon 0
Tallares 2 (Girotti 47, Martino 90+7)
Tallares win 3-1 on aggregate

Jul 7 – La Plata
Estudiantes 3 (Castro 9, 47, Zapiola 57)
Fortaleza 0
Estudiantes win 4-1 on aggregate

2022 COPA SUDAMERICANA

Round of 16 – 1st Leg

Jun 28 – Santiago
Colo-Colo 2 (Lucero 12, Solari 55)
Internacional 0

Jun 28 – Montevideo
Nacional 2 (Fagundez 4, Lozano 21)
Union 0

Jun 29 – San Cristobal
Deportivo Tachira 1 (Zanocelo 30 og)
Santos 1 (Angulo 86)

Jun 29 – Palmira
Deportivo Cali 0
Melgar 0

Jun 29 – La Paz
The Strongest 1 (Ursino 5)
Ceara 2 (Erick 76, Ze Roberto 90+3)

Jun 30 – Santiago
Universidad Catolica 2 (Zampedri 47, Valencia 85)
Sao Paulo 4 (Reinaldo 15 pen, Luciano 28, 39, Calleri 63)

Jun 30 – Asuncion
Olimpia 2 (D. Gonzalez 36, Silva 56)
Atletico Goianiense 0

Jun 30 – Quito
Ind. del Valle 2 (Schunke 45+2, Ayovi 90+3)
Lanus 1 (Belmonte 60)

Round of 16 – 2nd Leg

Jun 5 – Porto Alegre
Internacional 4 (Alan Patrick 29, Edenilson 32, Alemao 60, Pedro Henrique 74)
Colo-Colo 1 (Costa 15 pen)
Internacional win 4-3 on aggregate

Jul 5 – Santa Fe
Union 1 (Britez 70)
Nacional 2 (I. Ramirez 78, J. Rodríguez 83)
Nacional win 4-1 on aggregate

Jul 6 – Santos
Santos 1 (Marcos Leonardo 69)
Deportivo Tachira 1 (Uribe 27)
2-2 on aggregate. Tachira win 4-2 on pens

Jul 6 – Arequipa
Melgar 2 (Cuesta 58 pen, 73)
Deportivo Cali 1 (Mosquera 90+7)
Melgar win 2-1 on aggregate

Jul 6 – Fortaleza
Ceara 3 (Richardson 23, Victor Luis 26, Lima 52)
The Strongest 0
Ceara win 5-1 on aggregate

Jul 7 – Sao Paulo
Sao Paulo 4 (Luciano 14, Eder 45+5 pen, Joao Moreira 59, Rodrigo 81)
Universidad Catolica 1 (Fuenzalida 89)
Sao Paulo win 8-3 on aggregate

Jul 7 – Lanus
Lanus 0
Independiente del Valle 0
Independient del Valle win 2-1 on aggregate

Jul 7 – Goiania
Atletico Goianiense 2 (Churin 4, Airton 8)
Olimpia 0
2-2 on aggregate. Goianiense win 5-3 on pens

Internationals

2022 COSAFA CUP

Group A

Jul 5: Seychelles 0-1 Botswana; Angola 3-1 Comoros
Jul 7: Comoros 0-1 Botswana; Angola 3-0 Seychelles
Jul 10: Seychelles 1-2 Comoros; Botswana 1-0 Angola

Final standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Botswana (Q)	3	3	0	0	3	0	9
Angola	3	2	0	1	6	2	6
Comoros	3	1	0	2	3	5	3
Seychelles	3	0	0	3	1	6	0

Group B

Jul 6: Mauritius 0-3 Eswatini; Lesotho 2-1 Malawi
Jul 8: Malawi 1-1 Eswatini; Lesotho 2-1 Mauritius
Jul 10: Mauritius 0-2 Malawi; Eswatini 2-0 Lesotho

Final standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Eswatini (Q)	3	2	1	0	6	1	7
Lesotho	3	2	0	1	4	4	6
Malawi	3	1	1	1	4	3	4
Mauritius	3	0	0	3	1	7	0

Quarter-Finals

Jul 12 – Durban
Madagascar 0
Namibia 2 (limbondi 52 pen, Rudath 66)

Jul 12 – Durban
Zambia 1 (Kopelang 10 og)
Botswana 1 (Mangolo 52)
Zambia win 5-4 on pens

Jul 13 – Durban
South Africa 0
Mozambique 0
Mozambique win 5-4 on pens

Jul 13 – Durban
Senegal 1 (L. Camara 8)
Eswatini 1 (Mkhontfo 60)
Senegal win 10-9 on pens

Plate Semi-Finals

Jul 15 – Durban
Madagascar 1 (Razafidranaivo 87)
South Africa 2 (Sifama 23, Butsaka 85)

Jul 15 – Durban
Botswana 2 (Morwalela 41, Thatanyane 87)
Eswatini 0

Semi-Finals

Jul 15 – Durban
Namibia 1 (Muzeu 6)
Mozambique 0

Jul 15 – Durban
Zambia 4 (Kampamba 18, 61, Sautu 36, R. Banda 58)
Senegal 3 (L. Camara 22, Diouf 72, N'Diaye 88)

Plate Final

Jul 17 – Durban
South Africa 2 (Van Wyk 34, Rasebotja 80)
Botswana 1 (Kebue 90+3)

Third-Place Play-Off

Jul 17 – Durban
Mozambique 1 (Lau King 90+3)
Senegal 1 (Diouf 78 pen)
Senegal win 4-2 on pens

Final

Jul 17 – Durban
Namibia 0
Zambia 1 (Maova 111 og)
After Extra-Time

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GROUP EDITOR
Stephen Fishlock

ASSISTANT EDITORS
Jamie Evans & Jared Tinslay

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EDITORIAL
Kelsey Media, The Granary, Downs Court, Yalding Hill, Yalding, Maidstone, Kent, ME18 6AL

ADVERTISING AND SPONSORSHIP
Talk Media Sales: David Lerpiniere
Tel: 01732 445325
Email: david.lerpiniere@talkmediasales.co.uk

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PRINT PRODUCTION CONTROLLERS
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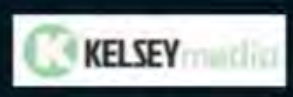

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Wes Brown

Manchester Utd 3 Leeds Utd 0

1997-98 Premier League, Old Trafford

In a career that included two Champions League winners' medals and five Premier League titles with Manchester United, Wes Brown's most cherished moment is where it all started – his first-team debut for the Red Devils...

"When I look back on my career, the match I remember more than any other might surprise people.

I won the Champions League with United, lifted loads of trophies and realised every dream I could have had and more in my time with the club, yet the game that means more to me than any other was my first-team debut against Leeds United in May 1998.

Arsenal had already won the Premier League title, so the boss put a few of the young lads on the bench and I was one of the fortunate ones to get on. It was the ultimate moment for me.

As a local lad, to be given the chance to play for Manchester United in the Premier League seemed impossible when I was a kid. Then all of a sudden I'm stood on the touchline at Old Trafford and Sir Alex Ferguson has asked me to go on.

I remember warming up just thinking: "This is happening – don't make a mess of it."

A couple of years before my debut, we had the likes of Gary and Phil Neville coming through, as well as Paul Scholes, Nicky Butt and David Beckham, so they showed us all what was possible. When you are a kid at a massive club like United and you see so many players who are not much older than you getting into the first team and winning trophies, you realise you can do it as well.

I didn't sleep the night before as big Pally [Gary Pallister] told me I was starting and it was hard for me to believe. I was rolling around in bed thinking about it and then the morning of the game comes and it's hard not to be nervous.

In the end, he was wrong and I was on the bench, but there was always a chance I'd get on. You can try to convince yourself it's just like any other game you have played as a kid or in the United youth team, but it's more than that.

I was up against Leeds striker Jimmy-Floyd Hasselbaink for the final half-hour and he was a big, strong, powerful centre-forward. It was a massive test for me, but I remember coming away thinking I'd done really well and it convinced me that I could stay in and around the first team.

That was the end of a journey in a lot of ways. In my first training session with the first team I was marking Mark Hughes, and he ran me ragged. I remember thinking that I would never be able to compete with big powerful men like that. He had legs like tree trunks and was just way too strong for me.

Early years... Wes Brown

> "I remember warming up just thinking: 'This is happening – don't make a mess of it'"

A few years after that, I'd filled out a bit and was ready for my first-team debut and thankfully I managed to make a good impression.

I'll always be grateful for what the club and my team-mates gave me, but that debut moment will always be the most precious for me."

Interview by Kevin Palmer

Champions League winner...parading the trophy with Ronaldo

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